THE DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE PRESS POOL: DID IT WORK IN PANAMA?

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This project analyzes the effectiveness of the press pool concept during Operation Just Cause. The author gives a detailed historical background relating to the development of the pool concept, a content analysis of stories appearing in four newspapers 20-26 December 1989, and a subjective analysis of press and military opinion appearing in public sources. The project includes original research derived from unpublished source material from Pentagon files.

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To Whom it May Concern:

This Master's Report received a grade of Pass. It met all requirements of the journalism department's graduate degree program.

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INTRODUCTION

In 1983, the United States invaded the island of Grenada. The American press was not allowed to cover the operation. This event caused a re-evaluation of the relationship between the press and the military by both groups.

The military responded to press criticism after Grenada by forming a panel, the Sidle Panel, to study the military/press relationship. The panel recommended the press always be included in military operations but said that operational security must also be maintained. The way to do this was by having a small group of media, a press pool, go with the troops at the beginning of an operation to provide media access until the regular media could arrive. In this way, operational security could be protected and the press could cover the story at the same time.

The pool was established in 1985 and has been used twelve times to date. It was used for the first time in actual combat during Operation Just Cause, the invasion of Panama in December 1989. This paper traces the history of the press in reporting American military actions and provides a brief history of the forming and use of the Department of Defense national media pool. The purpose of this paper is to determine whether the press pool functioned effectively in Panama.

NOTE TO READER

When dealing with the government or the military, a person runs into many abbreviations and acronyms. Journalists also use abbreviations frequently. I have used a few abbreviations in this paper and their full meaning follows.

DOD = Department of Defense

CJCS = Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff

JCS = Joint Chiefs of Staff

AP = Associated Press

CINC = Commander in Chief

I have used the terms "media pool" and "press pool" interchangeably throughout this paper. These terms refer to the DOD national media pool.

METHODOLOGY

In order to determine the effectiveness of the Panama press pool, I decided to review both military and press comments on the pool. I did this by reading professional articles as well as stories that appeared in newspapers and magazines. The military also provided reports that had been prepared after the operation on the functioning of the press pool. Unpublished transcripts of interviews with military personnel and media personnel were also used. One of the journalists who was a member of the pool was interviewed but his information and that available from other sources was the same.

Using press and military opinion provided the subjective part of the research. In order to gain an objective view of the success or failure of the press pool, four newspapers were reviewed to determine if stories from the press pool were published in the print media. Only the newspapers for the seven-day period December 20-26, 1989, were reviewed. These were the first seven days of the operation in Panama. The press pool was deactivated on the fourth day. Allowing for some delay, the first seven days was a reasonable time period for any pool stories to appear in the newspapers. When looking for the stories in the papers only the stories originating from Panama were considered since the pool was in Panama. Story bylines were used to determine if the reporter was a pool reporter or not. There were some AP stories did not have a byline. The AP did have two reporters in the pool so the AP stories that were not attritbuted to a specific individual were noted. If a story was attributed to an individual

who was not part of the pool that was written down. What remained was a list of the stories that originated in Panama during those seven days, whether or not they were pool stories, and how long each story was.

Each of the newspapers used is either a member of the pool or a subscriber to a wire service that is a member of the pool. The complete Department of Defense press pool has twenty-eight newspaper members but not all have a representative on each pool that goes on an operation. Pool members share information with other members.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The founding fathers of the United States crafted the Constitution over 200 years ago. Since that time, the document has been challenged and modified but the First Amendment, which protects the freedom of the press, has remained intact. Some of the people who drafted the Constitution were critical of the press of their time but they thought that having a free press to provide information to the public was necessary so that the public could act as citizens of a democracy (Klaidman, 5). A free and open democracy would not be possible without freedom of the press.

Just how far was this freedom supposed to extend? Today, there are many legal cases that go as far as the U.S. Supreme Court in an effort to answer this question. Many libel cases revolve around the question of freedom of the press (Klaidman, 8). The government has challenged press rights to information, using national security as an issue. The prior restraint by the administration of President Richard Nixon in response to the publication of the Pentagon Papers is an example of this. National security really becomes a point of contention between the press and the government when the country is at war or contemplating military action.

Despite government lack of enthusiasm when it came to including the press in military actions, in most cases, the press has always managed to be in on the fight. During the American Revolution, the

press was used by both sides as a propaganda machine. It was useful for rousing the patriots to fight the British. The press was also partisan. There was no attempt at objectivity, a concept that was not to be raised until the 1830s (Schudson, 4). The newspapers did print the news about the war that was available but their real function was to act as a means of communicating with the public for one side or the other (Tebbel, 7). As Tebbel and Watts point out, the press at the time was not like the press of today. There were no reporters and editors did not assign stories and then check them for balanced reporting. The newspapers were produced by printers who were involved in other pursuits such as book printing and perhaps politics (Tebbel, 7). It is doubtful if the average citizen ever got a true picture of what was going on in the war.

The press of the time was not received with universal approval any more than it is today. General George Washington was not happy when he found the papers devoted to the patriot cause were printing information that could be used by the British.

> In May of 1777, for instance, he complained to the president of the Congress, "It is much to be wished that our printers were more discreet in many of their Publications. We see almost in every Paper, Proclamations or accounts transmitted by the Enemy, of an injurious nature. If some hint or caution could be given them on the Subject, it might be of Material Service" (Tebbel, 8).

On the other hand, the Tory papers were doing the same thing and Washington used them to get information on the enemy. He also used the papers to "publicize court martial cases as object lessons to his frequently disgruntled troops" (Tebbel, 8). At the time there were really no limits on the press other than logistical ones. The papers could print almost anything, rumor or fact. The only thing that

stopped a paper was censorship by the people, who would physically attack a paper and its printer that did not reflect their opinion (Tebbel, 5). Politicians rarely brought the papers to task for libel so the papers were free to print almost anything (Tebbel, 9).

The War of 1812 featured much the same press conditions as the revolution except the American press was not split in its partisanship. The British were definitely the enemy this time and the press encouraged the public in this belief. The government did not try to censor the press.

By the time the war with Mexico, 1846-1848, came to pass, the American press had changed its character somewhat. The penny press had come into being and the papers were available to a larger audience. Technological advances had been made and objectivity was a concern. The papers were no longer run by one man but had an editor and reporters. Reporters were sent to cover the war. One of them became the prototype for the modern war correspondent. He was George W. Kendall, a reporter for the New Orleans Picayune. Kendall not only accompanied the American forces, he fought in the war as well. He "captured a Mexican flag, was once wounded in action, was twice cited in official dispatches, and by the end of the war had prefixed to his name the title of 'Major'" (Mathews, 55). Kendall also set up an express system using couriers and horses in an effort to beat the competition in the reporting of war news. There was no censorship or control of the press, which was pro-war in any case.

The Civil War saw the use of the telegraph by the press and the arrival of many more reporters on the field of battle. About 500 correspondents reported for the North alone (Knightley, 20). The

European press also sent reporters. It was the most reported war up to that time. It was also the first war in which the government set some restrictions on the press. Censorship was imposed by both sides in an effort to limit information to the enemy. In the North, criticism of the conduct of the war was stifled (Knightley, 24). Unfortunately for the correspondents, they never received regulations that defined exactly what they could and could not do (Mathews, 84). Consequently, many got into trouble with commanders without knowing why.

The reporters were dependent upon commanders because they had no official status in the war. Sometimes they performed services for the forces they were traveling with but they were not considered soldiers. This lack of status caused problems when they were captured by the enemy because they could be, and sometimes were, shot as spies. Their own side was often just as cruel, with reporters being court-martialed for disobeying the commander they accompanied.

In the Spanish-American War, 1898, the government did not impose restrictions. Nevertheless, reporters found news hard to get at the beginning of the war because "they were barred from the 'war zone' by Spanish military authorities" (Schudson, 61). This led artist Frederic Remington, sent to Cuba with Richard Davis by Randolph Hearst, to wire his editor, "Everything is quiet. There is no trouble here. There will be no war. Wish to return." Hearst's famous supposed response was, "Please remain. You furnish the pictures and I'll furnish the war" (Schudson, 61). War news was news that sold papers and Hearst seemed particularly interested in getting the United States into a war with Spain (Knightley, 55).

The war turned into a media event with the Associated Press chartering "a flotilla of boats, which, throughout the naval engagements, cruised at will through the battle lines, ignoring fire from both sides and scurrying back and forth to the nearest cable station" (Knightley, 56). Newspapers entered the fray in competition with Hearst, and famous writers such as Stephen Crane were sent to cover the action. Once again correspondents took up arms, with Crane capturing a town in Puerto Rico single-handedly and James Creelman, a reporter for Hearst, leading a bayonet charge outside Santiago. Military and press relations were good.

The free and easy days of the Spanish-American War were not revisited in World War I. The American press began covering the war at its start and so the press was at the mercy of the rules of foreign governments. These rules differed according to which country a correspondent was in and what stage the war was in. The British had perhaps the stiffest regulations. They censored press work, conducted correspondents on tours designed to show the British side of things and if a neutral correspondent accredited to the British Army later reported from the German side and was subsequently captured by the British he could be executed as a spy (Knightley, 115).

Other countries were less strict with the neutral press. While it was winning, Germany provided the correspondents with easy access to the front and did little censoring. Despite providing opportunities for objective coverage to the neutral press, the nations involved in the war censored their own journalists heavily. The native press was used as a propaganda machine.

Knightley writes:

> To enable the war to go on, the people had to be steeled for further sacrifices, and this could not be done if the full story of what was happening on the Western Front was known. And so began a great conspiracy. More deliberate lies were told than in any other period of history, and the whole apparatus of the state went into action to suppress the truth (80).

According to Knightley, propaganda was first used in an organized and scientific manner in World War I. When the United States finally entered the war, the Committee on Public Information was formed to change public opinion from a neutral to anti-German stance (Knightley, 122). As part of the propaganda effort, the press had to be controlled. A system of censorship was imposed and correspondents were required to be accredited. In order to receive accreditation, a journalist first had to appear in person before the Secretary of War or his representative and swear to convey the truth to the people but not provide information that might be useful to the enemy. He or she had to provide an autobiographical sketch and pay the Army $1,000 to cover his or her equipment and maintenance. A $10,000 bond was also required to make sure the journalist behaved. If journalists broke any rules while covering the war, they would be sent home and the $10,000 would be given to charity.

When the correspondent arrived in Europe, he or she was dependent upon the military for transportation and information. Stories also had to go through military censors before being sent back to the United States. Many stories negative to the cause were squashed by the censors but some correspondents managed to trick the censors and get the facts out. Most of the reporting, however, conformed to the party line and some journalists were quite willing when it came

to spreading stories of German horrors. After the war, some journalists investigated the atrocity tales and found no evidence to support many of them. The public became disillusioned when it discovered the propaganda lies after the war, making similar efforts in World War II more difficult for the government.

World War II saw the press "get on side" more than it had in the previous war and the military considered correspondents part of the military. There was censorship in the United States and in the various theaters of operation. The degree of censorship varied according to the area a correspondent was in. Once again, correspondents were accredited and part of the accreditation was agreeing to send copy through the military censors prior to publication. The censors were more apt to cut copy if it was questionable than let it go. Knightley writes:

> Correspondents seek to tell as much as possible as soon as possible; the military seeks to tell as little as possible as late as possible. Since the armed forces and not the correspondents were running the war, censorship was spectacularly successful. As the author and correspondent Fletcher Pratt wrote: "The official censors pretty well succeeded in putting over the legend that the war was won without a single mistake by a command consisting exclusively of geniuses" (276).

According to Knightley, most reporters came to depend upon the censors and at the end of the war were lost without them. One correspondent felt the censorship allowed the military command to speak more freely to the correspondents and so the press got a better idea of what was going on in the war (Knightley, 315).

The press also practiced self-censorship when it hushed up such events as when General Patton slapped soldiers twice for what he thought was malingering. Correspondents also flouted the censors. Edward Kennedy, head of the Associated Press' Paris Bureau, achieved

the scoop of the century by releasing news of Germany's surrender a day before the official announcement was to occur. The act eventually cost Kennedy his job when he refused to admit he had been wrong. The journalists who had not released the information before the official time were not pleased with Kennedy either and wrote a letter to General Eisenhower deploring Kennedy's action.

The press became part of the military machine, traveling with the soldiers, using military supplies and equipment, and journalists were considered "assimilated" officers. It was not until after the war that some began to rethink their position.

> Thirty years later, Charles Lynch, a Canadian, who had been accredited to the British army for Reuters, grasped the nettle. "It's humiliating to look back at what we wrote during the war. It was crap - and I don't exclude the Ernie Pyles or the Alan Mooreheads. We were a propaganda arm of our governments. At the start the censors enforced that, but by the end we were our own censors. We were cheerleaders. I suppose there wasn't an alternative at the time. It was total war. But, for God's sake, let's not glorify our role. It wasn't good journalism. It wasn't journalism at all" (Knightley, 333).

The Korean War, 1950 through 1953, was different from World War II for both the press and the military. At first, there was no official censorship. Correspondents were asked only to protect military secrecy. This the journalists did but the military was horrified when it read the true descriptions of the war the correspondents were writing. The military soon told reporters that they could not write anything that criticized decisions made by United Nations commanders or of conduct by allied soldiers on the battlefield (Knightley, 337). The correspondents became confused as to what they could and could not write and were soon asking for official censors to review their copy. This did not occur until six

months into the war when military censorship was established with a vengeance. If correspondents violated the new regulations they could be punished in a variety of ways, such as being sent home or even court-martialed.

The correspondents were also dependent upon the military for transportation, boarding, and facilities in which to do their work. Communication equipment was provided by the military. Soon, the correspondents became as much a part of the military as they had been during World War II although the military this time was not as happy to have the press around or as helpful to the press (Knightley, 338). When the peace conferences began in the middle of 1951, the military decided to censor them completely and correspondents were not allowed to talk to U.N. negotiators or attend the talks. They were briefed by military personnel and received all information from the military. The military felt the correspondents could not be trusted to back the war wholeheartedly and tried to control them as much as possible (Knightley, 353).

In the end, the press responded to the pressure to be patriotic and conformed to the military's idea of how the war should be reported (Knightley, 356). National interests took precedence over the journalists' endeavors to reveal the reality of the situation.

If the Korean War gave the military a chance to lament the correspondents' failure to "get on side," Vietnam provided even more opportunities to do so. Vietnam was different in a number of ways from the previous wars and differences extended to press coverage of the war. There was no official censorship during the war, only a set of ground rules agreed upon by bureau chiefs and the military in

1965. Correspondents had to agree to follow the ground rules before they could be accredited. Some correspondents wanted official censors because they were unsure of the rules but politically censorship was not possible because the war would have to be declared officially before censorship could be imposed (Mercer, 250). Reporters were free to roam Vietnam as far as the United States was concerned. The South Vietnamese government was less lenient. If reporters wrote anything that displeased that government they could find themselves out of the country. For the most part, however, reporters had unprecedented access to the frontlines and soldiers (Mercer, 245). Military transportation was available and the commanders in the field were usually helpful to reporters. The military did try to manage the news in small ways, however. Correspondents relied on military transportation to reach some areas and transportation could be limited. Kevin Williams points out that of the 647 reporters accredited in March, 1968, only about seventy-five to eighty went out into the field on a regular basis (Mercer, 254). By controlling access to the field the military could influence the image presented (Mercer, 254).

As the correspondents went up the military chain of command, relations between the press and the military were not as good as they were at the lower levels. The military high commands were more responsible to political powers and had to follow the prevailing political policy. At times, what was being reported from Saigon was not what was being reported in Washington, D.C. This led to friction between reporters and their headquarters, and military leaders and information officers in Vietnam and their superiors in the Pentagon.

They were not the only groups at odds. The government had tried tosell the war to the American people with a public relations campaign and continued emphasis on the idea that the war would soon be won. The public soon discovered that there was a gap in between what the government was telling it and what was reality. This became known as the credibility gap during the Johnson administration. Soon the whole country was at odds over the war.

According to Kevin Williams, Vietnam occurred at a time when American society was changing and it is hard to say whether this was a cause or effect of the war (Mercer, 221). During this period, the American people lost confidence in the military, the media, and the government, and the relationship between these groups changed (Mercer, 221). Each felt the other was not being candid. Tebbel and Watts point out the paradox that occurred: the media's growing distrust of the government during the Nixon administration was matched by an equal distrust of the press by the public (472). Many in the military blamed the press for the failure in Vietnam although studies on whether having the war in American living rooms negatively affected public opinion of the war have not been conclusive. Williams quotes studies that say television did and did not affect public opinion.

Vietnam left its mark on the United States. Ronald Reagan used the image of a strong America to gain the presidency. Some scholars believe that it was his ability to make people think America was strong and everything would be wonderful again that made him so popular. Some people believe that one event during his presidency helped his image. The invasion of Grenada in October 1983 boosted

Reagan's popularity and made many Americans proud. It was not such a great success as far as the nation's press was concerned. The press was left behind during the invasion and not allowed to go to the tiny island until 48 hours after the invasion began. It was a historically unprecedented step, according to Tebbel and Watts (543). The press made official protestations but the public thought the press had got what it deserved and was not too concerned about being left in the dark when it came to military matters (Tebbel, 543). According to Larry Speakes, Reagan's spokesman, the administration wanted to keep the press in the dark and so did not announce the invasion until it was well under way (Speakes, 155). Reagan denied he had anything to do with the decision but whoever made it succeeded in keeping most of the press out of Grenada until the fighting was over (Tebbel, 543).

As a result of the outcry from the press, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, General John W. Vessey Jr., decided a commission was needed to study the problem of media and military relations. The commission was chaired by Major General (Ret.) Winant Sidle, who had been a military spokesman in Vietnam. Originally the commission was to include both military and press representatives. The press declined to attend the briefings as it felt the press should not be involved in a government panel. Sidle then asked press experts to be on the panel instead. The panel consisted of fourteen members and met from February 6 to February 10, 1984. Representatives of the media and military public affairs made presentations to the commission. The panel was created to make recommendations to Vessey on, "How do we conduct military operations in a manner that safeguards the lives of our military and protects

the security of the operation while keeping the American public informed through the media?" (Sidle, 2).

Although the press was not represented on the panel, twenty-five press representatives speaking for nineteen news organizations and associations did present information to the panel. The panel made a statement of principle and eight recommendations in a final report to Vessey. The statement of principle said:

> The American people must be informed about United States military operations and this information can best be provided through both the news media and the Government. Therefore, the panel believes it is essential that the U.S. news media cover U.S. military operations to the maximum degree possible consistent with mission security and the safety of U.S. forces (Sidle, 3).

The eight recommendations were:

1. That public affairs planning for military operations be conducted concurrently with operational planning. This can be assured in the great majority of cases by implementing the following:

   a. Review all joint planning documents to assure that JCS guidance in public affairs matters is adequate.

   b. When sending implementing orders to Commanders in Chief in the field, direct CINC planners to include consideration of public information aspects.

   c. Inform the Assistant Secretary of Defense (Public Affairs) of an impending military operation at the earliest possible time. This information should appropriately come from the Secretary of Defense.

   d. Complete the plan, currently being studied, to include a public affairs planning cell in OJCS to help ensure adequate public affairs review of CINC plans.

   e. Insofar as possible and appropriate, institutionalize these steps in written guidance or policy.

2. When it becomes apparent during military operational planning that news media pooling provides the only feasible means of furnishing the media with early access to an operation, planning should provide for the largest possible press pool that is practical and minimize the length of time the pool will be necessary before "full coverage" is feasible.

3. That, in connection with the use of the pools, the Joint Chiefs of Staff recommend to the Secretary of Defense that he study the matter of whether to use a pre-established and constantly updated accreditation or notification list of correspondents in case of a military operation for which a pool is required or the establishment of a news agency list for use in the same circumstances.

4. That a basic tenet governing media access to military operations should be voluntary compliance by the media with security guidelines or ground rules established and issued by the military. These rules should be as few as possible and should be worked out during the planning process for each operation. Violations would mean exclusion of the correspondent(s) concerned from further coverage of the operation.

5. Public Affairs planning for military operations should include sufficient equipment and qualified military personnel whose function is to assist correspondents in covering the operation adequately.

6. Planners should carefully consider media communications requirements to assure the earliest feasible availability. However, these communications must not interfere with combat and combat support operations. If necessary and feasible, plans should include communications facilities dedicated to the news media.

7. Planning factors should include provision for intra- and inter-theater transportation support of the media.

8. To improve media-military understanding and cooperation:

a. CJCS should recommend to the Secretary of Defense that a program be undertaken by ASD(PA) for top military public affairs representatives to meet with news organization leadership, to include meetings with individual news organizations, on a reasonably regular basis to discuss mutual problems, including relationships with the media during military operations and exercises. This program should begin as soon as possible.

b. Enlarge programs already under way to improve military understanding of the media via public affairs instruction in service schools, to include media participation when possible.

c. Seek improved media understanding of the military through more visits by commanders and line officers to news organizations.

d. CJCS should recommend that the Secretary of Defense host at an early date a working meeting with representatives of the broadcast news media to explore the special problems of ensuring military security when and if there is real-time or near real-time news media audiovisual coverage of a battle-

field and, if special problems exist, how they can best be dealt with consistent with the basic principle set forth at the beginning of this section of the report (Sidle, 4).

All members of the panel supported the recommendations and the report was sent to General Vessey with the panel recommending approval and implementation of the recommendations. In 1985, the Secretary of Defense followed one of the recommendations and established the DOD national media pool, "consisting of a small contingent of media which remains on alert in Washington, D.C., and is available for immediate, worldwide deployment" (CJCS, 1).

More than forty Washington-based media organizations have been accredited for pool membership. These organizations have agreed to keep selected journalists on alert and to protect the security of pool activation. The organizations involved in the pool include twenty-eight newspaper organizations, the three national news magazines, the three major wire services, the four major television networks, and approximately seven radio organizations. Each calendar quarter, the news organizations decide which ones will form the pool. Pool duty is rotated among the groups. Normally, a pool is composed of twelve journalists although this number can be increased or decreased depending on the situation and the availability of transportation. Basic ground rules have been established to cover pool operations and pool members have agreed to observe these rules.

Since the establishment of the pool, it has been exercised twelve times. Of those, two call-ups have been in response to real-world situations. The first was in July 1987 when the pool was activated to cover the first U.S. Navy escort of reflagged Kuwaiti oil tankers through the Persian Gulf. This was the first time the pool was used

in a real military operation as opposed to an exercise. The second was in December 1989 when the pool was sent to report on the invasion of Panama, Operation Just Cause. It was the first time the Department of Defense activated the pool to cover an actual combat operation.

The Department of Defense had used media pools prior to the Sidle panel's recommendations. They were used in Santo Domingo and Vietnam (Janka, 9). Reporters were transported around the battlefield in small groups in World War I and II. Not much was written about pools, however, until Grenada and the Sidle panel. After Grenada, much was written about excluding the press from the battlefield, both for and against this action, and what to do with the press during war. Many people suggested using a pool of some type. Les Janka, who resigned as Deputy White House Press Secretary for Foreign Affairs after Grenada, wrote that a small pool of journalists could have gone on the ships that were part of the invasion task force. In January 1984, representatives of ten media groups released a statement of principle about press access to military operations as a reaction to Grenada. The statement recommends protecting operational security by limiting the number of journalists who accompany the troops. Thomas Griffith wrote in Time:

> The sensible solution would have been to have a small pool of journalists along, tipped off in advance, sworn to secrecy, perhaps even sequestered. The pool members would have been required to share their notes and pictures with the rest of the press (91).

Jerry Friedham, executive vice president of the American Newspaper Publishers Association, said a small group of reporters could have gone to Grenada and not hurt the mission.

Although many people besides the panel brought up the idea of a pool to solve the problem of getting journalists to the battlefield without risking security, some were not happy with the pool concept. Tebbel and Watts write that after Grenada, media owners negotiated with the Department of Defense about the role of the press in war, something that never should have been negotiated according to Tebbel and Watts (543). Each time the pool has been used since its official creation, some commentary on it has appeared. The first use of the pool came as part of an exercise in Honduras in April 1985. It did not go as well as some who were involved might have hoped. The press was disappointed with the results of this first exercise (Radolf, 14). More pool activations followed. The pool seemed to work better in these exercises. Each time the pool was activated, the military and the press provided input on the performance of the pool after the exercise was completed. Technical problems were the main cause of press criticism. Although the press wrote about the pools being activated, the pools that received the most media attention were the ones that were not just exercises but involved real-world situations.

Steven Shively reviewed the use of the pool in the Persian Gulf during reflagging and escort operations in July 1987. Shively concluded that the pool worked well in the Gulf although he recommended a smaller pool and was concerned about the amount of equipment the press must take with it (53). Tim Ahern, a member of the Gulf pool, wrote that access to information and personnel was "terrific" (327). But he did not like the fact that the Navy read copy before it was sent. Ahern felt this could cause disputes, both minor and major, in the future. He also wrote that the major

problems for the pool were technical ones. Pool reports did get out and were used by Marlin Fitzwater, White House spokesman, during press conferences. A story Ahern filed was the first word released by the Pentagon concerning the tanker the Bridgeton when it hit a mine.

The consensus among the press seems to be that if a pool is the only way to get the story of a military operation then a pool is acceptable. Most journalists would prefer open coverage with few if any restrictions. In past war there have always been restrictions of some kind. The military agrees that open coverage should begin as soon as possible but exactly when this point occurs is open to argument. At the Defense Information School, public affairs officers are reminded of the American public's right to know what their military is doing. At this time, the pool seems to be the best way for the military to inform the public while protecting military men and women, and security. Shively writes that the media pool has helped military and press relations as each group has learned more about the other through the exercises. So far, the press has cooperated with the pool concept while informing the military of the pool's defects.

FINDINGS

Operation Just Cause began at about 1 a.m. December 20, 1989. The heaviest fighting was over with in about four hours while sporadic fighting and clean-up operations continued for a number of days. The operation was not complete until Panama's ex-leader, Manuel Noriega, surrendered to U.S. forces on January 3, 1990. The invasion involved about 25,000 U.S. troops. The casualty figures for civilians ranged from 202 to 2,000, depending upon who was doing the estimating (Hertsgaard, 77). By January 18, most troops had returned to the United States and the U.S. military command in Panama had resumed normal operations. January 31, the operation was officially complete.

The discussion on whether to send the DOD press pool began on December 17 during a meeting held by President Bush in his study. At that time the question of sending a pool and whether the pool would come from Washington, D.C., or from reporters already in Panama was discussed. The president was told by Secretary of Defense Dick Cheney that the pool would be activated and that it would come from Washington. President Bush indicated he had some concern about secrecy being maintained if the pool came from Washington (Hoffman, 6). According to Fred Hoffman's report, the issue still was not completely resolved on December 19 because on that day the vice president asked why the pool could not be organized in Panama rather than Washington. But, Pete Williams, the assistant secretary of defense for public affairs, said that Cheney had told him on December

18 that the operation was going as planned and that the press pool would go (Hoffman, 6). Williams said there was never any doubt the pool would go.

The pool call-up began at about 7:30 p.m. December 19. The pool members were supposed to report to Andrews Air Force Base by 9:30 and the plane was scheduled to takeoff at 11 p.m. The people doing the call-up experienced some difficulty contacting newspeople because of the holiday season. The process was also slowed down because more people were added to the pool and some of the people at the Pentagon did not realize this (Hoffman, 10). Despite these and other problems, the pool left Andrews AFB at 11:26 p.m. The pool consisted of fourteen journalists and two technicians. The technicians were for the satellite uplink Williams had invited NBC to take on the operation. It was the first time the pool took this type of equipment. The pool arrived in Panama at Howard Air Force Base at 5 a.m. December 20. Public affairs officers from the Southern Command had set up a media center at Quarry Heights across the canal from the air base. Unfortunately, the bridge that crossed the canal was closed and Quarry Heights was reportedly under fire. The pool was taken by helicopter to Fort Clayton where it stayed until about 10 a.m. when another helicopter was procured and the pool flew to Fort Amador to try to cover the action from there. There was not much to see by this time, only sporadic sniper fire (Sconyers, 5). The public affairs officers tried to get the pool to two other story opportunities that day but these opportunities never amounted to anything.

On day two the pool finally got to get some newsworthy items but the war was nearly over by that time. The media center was in use

with six telephone lines, two fax machines and a photo lab set up in the women's restroom. The officers' club at Quarry Heights was the site of the center. By day four of the operation, media representatives from around the world had arrived and the pool was deactivated. The first use of the pool in actual combat was over.

The response to the pool from both the military and the press was, with maybe one exception, negative. Some members of the pool hinted that the pool had been purposely kept from the action in an attempt to prevent independent coverage of the invasion (Hertsgaard, 77). Pete Williams used the word "incompetence" to describe the military's public affairs efforts. A review of both military and journalistic comment on the subject reveals the events and actions that led to the feeling of failure for both groups.

There was much written in the press about the press pool after the invasion of Panama. One of the earliest reports appeared in the January 6 edition of Editor & Publisher. The article, by George Garneau, stated that the pool had flunked its first combat assignment, arriving too late to cover any of the combat action. Garneau quoted pool member Matthew Mendelsohn as saying the pool was "a complete and dismal failure" and that the journalists were controlled by the military public affairs officers (4). Mendelsohn said the press did not "come up empty" but the journalists felt they were not covering events of high news quality. One news organization did have a good word for the pool. Reuters already had staff in Panama and had two people with the pool. Bruce Russell, the Washington bureau chief for Reuters, said the pool "provided a good flow of pictures and greatly enhanced our coverage" (Garneau (1),

84). Russell said the pool was slow the first day but that it worked well later on (Garneau (1), 84).

An article by Stanley W. Cloud in the January 8 issue of Time magazine quotes pool member Steve Komarow of the Associated Press as saying, "We kind of missed the story" (61). Cloud then goes on to lay the responsibility for the pool's failure on the military. He writes, "the Army kept them under such tight control that journalistic initiative was all but impossible." Cloud quotes Kevin Merida, a pool member from the Dallas Morning News, as saying, "It was a Keystone Kops operation, especially at first. The military seemed to have no concept of what our role was. The whole first day was devoted to taking us to places where the action was already over. It was like forming a White House pool and then showing them an empty hall and saying, 'This is where the President spoke.'" Retired Major General Sidle, the head of the Sidle Panel, was quoted in the article. He said, "If you're going to let the media in you have to let them do something."

Cloud wrote that many experienced journalists are willing to put up with the frustrations and problems involved with a pool just to get to areas that would otherwise be denied to them. His article ended with a quote from Rear Admiral Joseph Metcalf, leader of the Grenada task force. Metcalf commented on the Panama operation and asked what happened to the journalists already in the country. Those journalists, he said, could have found out what was going on and it was their own fault if they missed the story. Cloud commented the admiral was being "unduly harsh" (he called the journalists knuckleheads), but added that Metcalf had a point.

The New York Times printed an editorial on January 15 that led with the opinion that the Pentagon had failed the system and that it is the President's job to make sure the system works. The editorial points out that the pool got to Panama four hours after the fighting began and reporters could not file their stories until six hours after their arrival. A lack of institutional memory within the government could have been part of the problem, according to this editorial. The Bush administration may not have felt an "urgent need to abide by an accommodation struck by Ronald Reagan's Pentagon." The editorial stated that the officers of the Southern Command "treated the journalists as an unwelcome nuisance." The relationship between the military and the media was cited as another part of the problem. Neither group seems to understand or trust the other. The editorial stated that both sides need to accept certain demands and limitations. Finally, the editorial said the responsibility of ensuring that the press is present in operations such as Panama belongs to the civilian government. These civilian commanders have to tell the military commanders to make time for the press or, during combat, it is doubtful that they will.

Fred Francis, NBC's representative in the pool, wrote in an after-action report for the Pentagon that the Pentagon's public affairs people were only given a few hours to plan the activation of the media pool and that this contributed to the pool's failure. He also said the pool probably should not have been formed at all. Journalists who were in Panama could have been placed with the troops prior to the invasion to cover the action. Waiting for transportation was a problem in Panama. Another problem occurred

when the pool finally got transportation to Fort Amador. At the fort there were a few interviews and some shooting but nothing really newsworthy. Francis wrote that the reporters could hear fighting at Noriega's headquarters two miles away and could see that the buildings were on fire. The pool asked to be taken there but was told it was too dangerous. Francis went on to write, "The pool was repeatedly denied or ignored when it asked for access to front line troops, wounded soldiers, picture opportunites at the air base, senior commanders, simple interviews with GIs who had seen the fighting." In Francis' opinion, all the pool got was "a steady stream of propaganda."

Francis did not limit his evaluation to the military side of the matter. He also wrote that the media had made mistakes too. He wrote that the pool was too large. It should be composed of one print journalist, one radio journalist, one TV journalist, one video cameraman and one still photographer, he wrote. This would be a mini-pool that would be sent in the beginning and then joined by more journalists within twenty-four hours to form a larger pool. Some of the reporters were not prepared for the pool and did not have military experience. Francis wrote, "Troops expect seasoned professionals, not reporters who have to be looked after." He recommended that the pool be activated every three months and should work with the commanders of the rapid response forces.

Francis also recommended that the journalists should have a minimum standard of military experience and that military leaders should have an understanding of the media. He wrote, "There must be clear and unequivocal political and military instructions to the

commanders in the field" regarding the involvement of the pool in the initial phases of an operation. He also recommended that a general officer representing the Joint Chiefs of Staff should accompany the pool. Finally, Francis wrote that it all came down to trust. Both the media and the military had to trust each other if a working relationship were ever to be achieved.

After the pool returned to Washington, Pete Williams, the assistant secretary of defense for public affairs, held a meeting on January 19 with the members of the press pool. The purpose of the meeting was to get reporters' response to the pool and comments on how to change and improve the pool. The meeting was transcribed. According to the transcripts, Steve Komarow, the AP reporter, said there were a lot of logistical problems but the key problem in his opinion was "a strong institutional resistance to us seeing anything." Komarow also remarked that the pool could have been split up in the beginning so that transportation would not have been so difficult to come by. Katherine Lewis, Houston Post, said the lack of action was a problem. She saw only one body and one wounded U.S. soldier while she was there, she said. She also said there were not enough briefings and that the logistics surrounding the filing of stories were "a nightmare." The concern over the pool's safety came as a surprise to her since she had assumed that she would be at considerable risk anyway.

During the meeting, reporters who had been in the Panama pool and reporters who had not been a part of that pool commented on the military mindset with regard to the media. Many said they felt the military did not trust the media. The journalists felt the military

was concerned with keeping them away from what was going on. One reporter said in a memo read by his newspaper's representative at the meeting, "(T)he key problem is that the press has not earned the trust of the military, and that is essential if we are to literally drop in on a combat commander and ask for his or her cooperation." Pool members who had been on other pool exercises remarked that many of the problems that occurred in Panama had occurred on other operations. Brad Calbfeld, from AP Radio, said it was "troubling" to him that the Pentagon had not pursued or acted upon lessons learned from previous experiences.

The problems that arose on the second and third days as other reporters began to arrive in Panama were discussed. The Southern Command tried to accommodate these reporters but the facilities were limited. Pool members felt that their work suffered because of this. Most commented that the pool should receive first consideration in those circumstances. The issue of unilateral coverage was also discussed. Unilateral coverage is when other journalists beside the pool are allowed into a combat area and open coverage is begun. The Southern Command was overwhelmed by the number of journalists who eventually arrived. Pete Williams said unilateral coverage was not really part of the pool discussion but that it is an issue that needed to be addressed. Fred Francis said the pool needed to be good enough to provide coverage for the first forty-eight hours. He also said if the reporters who landed at Howard AFB on the third day had been let loose, unescorted, in the area, there would have been twenty or thirty more hostages taken. On December 22, 220 reporters arrived at Howard AFB. About half of these returned home while the military

public affairs staff tried to accommodate the rest.

The size of the pool was discussed in greater depth. Most reporters commented that a mini-pool that would be added to later on was the best idea. Some said there would be problems with filing with a small pool. Technical problems with filing were also discussed. There were difficulties with this during the Persian Gulf pool as well as the Panama pool. Pete Williams pointed out that supporting the media is harder to do now than it was during World War II because of the technological innovations.

While the press had its opinion and comments on the Panama pool, the military was also taking a hard look at the operation. It is a normal function for the military to review an operation after it is completed and evaluate performance. Operation Just Cause was no exception. Williams asked Fred S. Hoffman, an AP veteran and former deputy of public affairs in the Pentagon, to review the pool and make recommendations. Hoffman's report was published in March. In addition to this report, the different commands involved in the operation wrote after-action reports as did the various public affairs staffs who took part. A team from Army Public Affairs interviewed key commanders and public affairs officers to get their views on the public affairs operation during the invasion and to find out what worked and what did not. Transcripts were made of these interviews. On May 18, the Joint Chiefs of Staff released a message to all commands to provide guidance for planning to accommodate a press pool in both exercise and real situations.

In many cases, military comment mirrored press comment. One exception was a comment by Bob Taylor, an assistant to Pete

Williams, that he thought the pool went well. This reaction was reported in an article in Editor & Publisher, January 6. "I think we had a big success," Taylor said. "It wasn't perfect - nothing is - but we'll go back and try to fix it" (Garneau (1), 84). Most of the other comments were not as positive.

The first problem identified by Colonel Ron Sconyers, the Southern Command public affairs officer, in an interview with the Army Public Affairs team, was that the public affairs staff was not brought into the picture early enough. He said he was formally told of the invasion plans on December 17, although he had an idea that something was going to happen before then. He was not allowed to tell his staff what was going on until the morning of December 19 when he was able to tell his deputy in general terms what was happening. At 5 p.m. his deputy was told exactly what was going on but the rest of the staff could not be told until 10 p.m., three hours before the invasion started. During the day, Sconyers had talked to Williams about the media pool. Sconyers said his opinion was that the media pool should be made up of journalists already in Panama, journalists whom he knew and could position in certain areas to cover the action. At 5 p.m. Sconyers was told the pool would come from Washington and would arrive at 3:30 a.m. Between 10 and 11 p.m. the public affairs staff set up the media center at Quarry Heights and prepared to receive the media pool.

Sconyers also talked about the problems he had getting transportation. He had a helicopter to take the pool from the air base to Fort Clayton and planned to use that helicopter to take the pool to other areas to cover the action. Unfortunately, the

helicopter was assigned another mission and left. Sconyers mentioned that the plan to take the pool to Quarry Heights had to be scratched because the bridge over the canal could not be used and Quarry Heights itself was under fire and there was no place to land. Sconyers also talked about staff problems. He and Lieutenant Colonel Ned Longsworth, the 18th Airborne Corps public affairs officer, decided that Longsworth should accompany the media pool. Sconyers said this was a mistake because it meant that there was no public affairs link with the command post for the invasion. If Longsworth had stayed with the command post, he could have kept Sconyers informed on what was happening as far as the fighting was concerned. Sconyers would then have been able to brief the pool and take them to the action areas. Longsworth tried to call to find out the good places to go and to determine where the helicopters were but the phones were out. He then walked to the command post and was gone for four hours during which time the pool sat at Fort Clayton and watched the CNN briefing with the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. The pool was not happy. Unknown to the pool, an interview with the new President of Panama had been planned for them but at the last minute the president decided not to do it, according to Sconyers. He was replaced by an embassy representative who lectured on Panama's history to the disgust of the reporters.

Sconyers said that all the problems encountered in trying to get the pool to different places and then not allowing the journalists to photograph certain things and interview certain people made the members think that there was a campaign to keep them from getting any news. Sconyers said he wished he was "so smart to come up with some

PR campaign to keep the media at bay." He felt it was a series of isolated events that caused the pool to work badly. His opinion was that the first thirty-six hours of the pool was really poor.

An interview the public affairs team had with three commanders who were involved in combat during the invasion gave some insight into the combat military opinion of the media pool. Lieutenant Colonel Harry Axson, a battalion commander with the 82nd Airborne Division, commented that the media pool was excellent. He said the pool knew what to do and understood when he told them they could not go to certain areas. "They didn't give you a hard time," he said. Some members of the press who were not with the pool were more "bullish or pushy," Axson said. Axson said his soldiers liked talking to the press. Colonel Jack Nix, a brigade commander, said "the days of closing off the war zone to the press are over with." He also said the public has a right to know if the military is "doing something wrong and stupid."

The public affairs team interviewed Lieutenant Colonel Ned Longsworth, the 18th Airborne Corps public affairs officer, who remarked that the military needed to make an investment in equipment, manpower, and training for public affairs in order to meet media needs. He said in situations like Panama the demand on public affairs is heavy. Colonel Sconyers said more than 1,100 journalists were handled by military public affairs during the Panama operation. Longsworth said transportation assets were needed also.

The report Fred Hoffman prepared for the Department of Defense included both press and military response to the press pool activation and performance. Hoffman made recommendations in the

report for future press pools. His overall conclusion on the operation was that the pool should not have been sent since the pool is designed for situations in which American media are not already present in the area of operations and that there was not an attempt to manipulate the pool. The problems the pool ran into were caused by "maladroitness, sometimes good intentions gone awry, and unanticipated obstacles" (Hoffman, 3).

Hoffman said that overemphasis on secrecy caused some problems because it reduced the planning time at both the Pentagon and Southern Command levels. Weakness in the planning area caused public affairs to be unprepared. The desire to maintain operational security also caused the pool to be called out late. Hoffman writes that Secretary Cheney knew that the pool would arrive in Panama after the fighting had started and that Cheney said he "did it with full knowledge" of the results but maintaining secrecy was more important. According to Hoffman's report it seems that senior military leaders were not consulted on when the pool was to be sent. The Defense Department's civilian leaders made the decision.

Hoffman's report reviews all the problems the pool had once it arrived in Panama. Lack of transportation and the inability to get the pool to the action areas and newsworthy events were highlighted in the report. Hoffman interviewed some of the military commanders involved in the operation. General Max Thurman, the head of the Southern Command, said, "I think we made a mistake by not having some of the press pool in with the 18th Airborne Corps so they could move with the troops." Lieutenant General Carl W. Stiner, the commander of combat troops during the operation, said he could have taken a

small pool with him on December 18 and it could have been set up in a position to watch the initial attack.

Hoffman concluded his report with seventeen recommendations for making the pool function properly (see App. A). The Pentagon implemented five of the recommendations. These were that the assistant secretary of defense for public affairs should be prepared to overcome secrecy or other obstacles that stand in the way of the quick deployment of the pool; should be kept informed of problems and act to resolve problems with the pool; should study a proposal to split the pool into two sections; should break the pool up so it is never deployed as a "single unwieldy unit"; should ensure regular briefings for the pool during an operation (Garneau (2), 12). The Pentagon accepted six other recommendations in principle and six others were under consideration.

As a result of the report, the Joint Chiefs of Staff released a message to all commands in May that provided new guidance with regard to the press pool. In the message, commanders were reminded of the importance of the media in military operations and the necessity of including plans for the press pool in exercise and contingency operational plans. The message outlined the minimum support commanders are expected to provide to the press pool. Support included daily briefings, access to combat areas, access to key command and staff personnel, planning and providing itineraries, providing transportation for the pool, and housing and food.

Since Operation Just Cause, the press pool was used for two weeks when troops deployed to Saudi Arabia for Operation Desert Shield. Lieutenant Commander Gregg Hartung, the media pool point of contact in the DOD public affairs office, said changes were implemented for

the Saudi Arabia pool as a result of the experiences of the Panama pool. He said it was the opinion around the Pentagon that the Saudi Arabia pool functioned much better than its predecessor. Members of the media have lined up to become part of the pool because the information coming back from the journalists in the Saudi Arabia pool was so good, Hartung said. The pool members were the first U.S. journalists in Saudi Arabia, he said. The new DOD directive covering the media pool should be out in the next few months, Hartung said.

Neither the press nor the Pentagon seemed to think the press pool was a success in Panama. A look at what information reached the United States and was published shows the concrete results of the pool. Four newspapers were reviewed for the first seven days of the operation. The pool was deactivated on the fourth day. Allowing for time delays, a review of those seven days should reveal all of the pool copy that was used. The four newspapers were The New York Times, the Los Angeles Times, the Washington Post, and The Arizona Daily Star. The seven days were December 20 - 26, 1989.

Only one pool-attributed story appeared in those four newspapers during the first seven days of the operation. It ran December 21, 1989, on page A1 of the Washington Post. A total of seventy stories had a Panama dateline for the seven-day period. Eight stories from the Associated Press did not have a byline and one story was from Reuters without a byline. Both AP and Reuters had journalists in the pool. Some of these stories may have contained information provided by pool members but, if so, it was not attributed to pool sources.

The Washington Post printed a total of twenty-three stories with a Panama dateline for approximately 453 column inches. The New York Times printed a total of sixteen stories for approximately 457 column inches. The Los Angeles Times printed a total of fifteen stories for approximately 296 column inches and The Arizona Daily Star printed sixteen stories for approximately 279 column inches. The one pool story in the Washington Post was approximately twenty-seven column inches long.

Freelancers and journalists already in Panama seemed to have written most of the stories. The New York Times' stories were mostly bylined with a name and then "special to the Times" while the AP's Eloy O. Aguilar wrote many of the AP stories. The Los Angeles Times had staff writers in Panama producing its stories. The Arizona Daily Star relied mostly on AP stories.

CONCLUSIONS

As far as the print media are concerned, the DOD press pool in Panama did not produce the results it was meant to. Both the Pentagon and the pool journalists said the pool did not work well during the first two days and a review of four newspapers showed that pool stories, with one exception, were not printed. Other journalists were already in Panama and reported on the invasion. More arrived within two days. The pool was meant to be used in situations where other journalists were not present and there was no way to get journalists to the area without military support. Panama did not fit that scenario. Journalists were in Panama and, as Colonel Sconyers pointed out, a pool could have been formed from those journalists. Many of the articles and interviews used as sources for this paper questioned the use of the pool from Washington, D.C. In hindsight, it probably would have been a better idea to use journalists already in Panama. But the journalists who rushed to Panama to provide what is called "unilateral coverage" would still have been a problem.

Using a pool is a good idea as far as the military is concernced because it is small and therefore easy to transport, support, and control. A small pool of journalists would be welcomed by most military people. Unfortunately, the media are more than just a small pool. More than 1,100 journalists converged on the military in Panama from the beginning of the operation until its official end on January 31. More attention needs to be paid to dealing with the

so-called unilateral journalists who will show up all too soon on the battlefield. This problem needs to be addressed. Journalists expect to have access to the action but how does the military provide that access while fighting and trying to keep those journalists safe? Most journalists say they accept the risk and do not want to be kept from the action because the military is afraid they will get hurt. But in Panama, some journalists were held hostage by members of Noriega's Dignity Battalions in the Marriott hotel and the military was asked to save them. As Pete Williams pointed out, American journalists are American citizens. The Department of Defense cannot refuse to help them even if journalists have told the DOD that they accept the risks. There is a problem: How to provide journalists access to the action without endangering their lives and the success of the operation?

The pool is a good way to solve this problem but most journalists do not like the idea of a pool and prefer open coverage. According to the press, the pool is only supposed to last until open coverage is able to begin. The Department of Defense seems to have a slightly different view of the pool. The pool should be kept intact until the military situation allows for open coverage to begin. This view is not spelled out by the military in the sources of information used for this paper but seems to be the general consensus. For Panama, Secretary Cheney and Williams did try to get the non-pool media down to Panama as quickly as possible. As it turned out, this was not a good thing as the public affairs staff in Panama was not prepared for the large influx of journalists and did not have the equipment to support them. This is another part of the problem. It is possible to support a small pool but supporting 200 or more

journalists at once is difficult. In Panama, the public affairs staff was unprepared for that task.

The press pool in Panama may have had difficulties but its problems are easy to fix. The pool must go before or with the troops who are invading. Operational security has been protected by the press before, and although there were some minor lapses during Panama, security has never been compromised by the press pool. The Department of Defense concern with security got the press pool off to a bad start because it made the pool late in getting to the action. The second problem was the lack of transportation. This can be solved by planning. Other logistical problems that were encountered can also be solved with planning. It was partly the lack of preparedness and planning that caused the press pool to be ineffective.

Many journalists linked the relationship between the military and the media to the pool's failure. The relationship did not play a large role in the pool's performance in this instance. The relationship is an uncomfortable one certainly. Neither group appears to trust the other much. The military's attitude towards the press may reflect the American public's attitude at present. The public does not trust the media and is critical of it. One journalist said there must be mutual trust and understanding between the military and the media for them to be able to work together. The military is trying to educate its personnel on the media, particularly after Panama. Sources did not reveal whether the media is doing the same. One of the reasons the military commanders liked the press pool was that its members seemed to understand more about the military and combat requirements. Fred Francis said pool members

should know more about the military than journalists who do not participate in the pool. The more each group knows about the other, the better the journalism product will be. The military can always be ordered to cooperate with the press but the media will get better coverage if that is avoided. Although the military/media relationship is imperfect at this time, the effect it had on the Panama pool was minimal.

The press and the military do need to concentrate on working together. The military must, and does seem to, realize that the press will be on the battlefield and must be considered when planning for combat. The press should consider that the military has a job to do and that job is its first priority. Both groups must also remember that there will be individuals from each who will be antagonistic toward the other group. Besides these concerns, modern technology and modern warfare must be considered. The press can now get to almost anywhere in a short period of time and set up operations. The military can do the same. The last two combat operations the U.S. military conducted (Grenada and Panama) were over within a short period of time and occurred in small areas. Covering these types of operations is difficult for both the press and the military. In Panama, the military was unable to provide safe transportation for the many journalists who arrived. The downtown area was unsafe for journalists to stay in, so the military had to provide room and board. This operation bore no resemblence to the old war days when the media took awhile to get to the combat zone and the military had time to clear areas and make sure they were safe.

Both the military and the press need to realize times have

changed. In order to get immediate coverage of a military operation like Operation Just Cause, a pool, whether local or national, has to be used. Many journalists and military personnel seem to agree on this. The Panama pool may have had its problems but the pool concept is the best way at present to meet press needs and military requirements in some situations.

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Transcripts of Operation Just Cause Phase II Collection Team Visits with Colonel Jack Nix, Lieutenant Colonel Harry Axson, Lieutenant Colonel Lynn Moore, Lieutenant Colonel Ned Longsworth, Major Doug Foster and Colonel Ron Sconyers. March 6, 8 and 12, 1990.

APPENDIX A

March 20, 1990

MEMORANDUM FOR CORRESPONDENTS

On January 8, 1990, Pete Williams, the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Public Affairs, asked Mr. Fred Hoffman to research the facts surrounding the DoD National Media Pool deployment to Panama in conjunction with Operation JUST CAUSE and to provide his findings and recommendations.

In the report, Mr. Hoffman gives an account of the operation, offers his observations about what happened, and makes 17 recommendations he believes would improve future media pool operations.

Some of the recommendations -- numbers 5, 6, 7, 8, and 10 -- will be implemented immediately. Others -- numbers 1, 3, 4, 9, 11, and 17 are agreed to in principle but require some refinement. The remaining recommendations, numbers 2, 12, 13, 14, 15, and 16 are under consideration and will require further consideration and coordination with the Joint Chiefs of Staff, the Unified Commands, and the media pool members.

The Department of Defense is committed to the National Media Pool and will make every effort to use the pool in a way that serves the interests of informing the American people about military activities.

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Tab L

As long as the pool is an officially sponsored mechanism, the Defense Department must be prepared to make it work right.

Accordingly, I offer the following recommendations:

1. The Secretary of Defense should issue a policy directive, to be circulated throughout the Department and the Armed Services, stating explicitly his official sponsorship of the media pool and requiring full support for it. That policy statement should make it clear to all that the pool must be given every assistance to report combat by U.S. troops from the start of operations.

2. All operational plans drafted by the Joint Staff must have an annex spelling out measures to assure that the pool will move with the lead elements of U.S. forces and cover the earliest stages of operations. This principle should be incorporated in overall public affairs plans.

3. A Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Public Affairs should closely monitor development of operation-related public affairs plans to assure they fulfill all requirements for pool coverage. The Assistant Secretary of Defense for Public Affairs should review all such plans. In advance of military action, those plans should be briefed to the Secretary of Defense and the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff along with the operation plans.

Public affairs staff officers and key staff personnel representing policy offices, such as International Security Affairs, should be brought into the planning process at the very earliest stage. The practice of keeping key staff officers with high security clearances out of the planning process in order to limit access to sensitive information should be followed only sparingly and eliminated where possible.

4. In the runup to a military operation, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff should send out a message ordering all commanders to give full cooperation to the media pool and its escorts. This requirement should be spelled out unambiguously and should reach down through all the echelons in the chain of command. Such a message should make clear that necessary resources, such as helicopters, ground vehicles, communications equipment, etc., must be earmarked specifically for pool use, that the pool must have ready access to the earliest action and that the safety of the pool members must not be used as a reason to keep the pool from action.

5. The ASD(PA) must be prepared to weigh in aggressively with the Secretary of Defense and the JCS Chairman where necessary to overcome any secrecy or other obstacles blocking prompt deployment of a pool to the scene of action.

6. After a pool has been deployed, the ASD(PA) must be kept informed in a timely fashion of any hitches that may arise. He must be prepared to act immediately, to contact the JCS Chairman, the Joint Staff Director of Operations and other senior officers who can serve to break through any obstacles to the pool. The ASD(PA) should call on the Defense Secretary for help as needed.

7. The ASD(PA) should study a proposal by several of the Panama poolers that future pools deploy in two sections. The first section would be very small and would include only reporters and photographers. The second section, coming later, would bring in supporting gear, such as satellite uplink equipment.

8. The national media pool should never again be herded as a single unwieldy unit. It should be broken up after arriving at the scene of action to cover a wider spectrum of the story and then be reassembled periodically to share the reporting results.

9. The pool should be exercised at least once during each quarterly rotation with airborne and other types of military units most likely to be sent on emergency combat missions.

10. During deployments, there should be regular briefings for pool newsmen and newswomen by senior operations officers so the poolers will have an up-to-date and complete overview of the progress of an operation they are covering.

11. There is an urgent need for restructuring of the organization which has the responsibility for handling pool reports sent to the Pentagon for processing and distribution. The ASD(PA) must assure that there is adequate staffing and enough essential equipment to handle the task. The Director of Plans, so long as he has this responsibility, should clearly assign contingency duties among his staff to ensure timely handling of reports from the pool. Staffers from the Administration Office, Community Relations and other divisions of OASD(PA) should be mobilized to help in such a task as needed.

12. The ASD(PA) should give serious consideration to a suggestion by some of the pool members to create a new pool slot for an editor who would come to the Pentagon during a deployment to lend professional journalism help to the staff officers handling pool reports. Such a pool editor could edit copy, question content where indicated and help expedite distribution of the reports.

13. The pool escorting system needs overhauling as well. There is no logical reason for the Washington-based escorts to be drawn from the top of the OASD(PA) Plans Division. The head of that division should remain in Washington to oversee getting out the pool products.

Pool escorts should be drawn from the most appropriate service, rather than limiting escort duty to officers of the Plans Division. The individual armed service public affairs offices should be required to assign military officers to the pool on a contingency basis. For example, if it's an Army operation, the escorts should be primarily Army officers. In the Panama deployment, the three Washington-based escorts wore Air Force and Navy uniforms in what was an overwhelmingly Army operation.

Escorts should deploy in field uniforms or draw them from field commands soon after arriving. The Panama pool escorts wore uniforms befitting a day behind the desk at the Pentagon and this, I found, had a jarring effect on the Army people with whom they dealt.

14. The ASD(PA) should close a major gap in the current system by requiring all pool participant organizations--whether print, still photo, TV or radio--to share all pool products

with all elements of the news industry. Pool participants must understand they represent the entire industry.

Any pool participant refusing to share with all legitimate requestors should be dropped from the pool and replaced by another organization that agrees to abide by time honored pool practices.

15. There is merit in a suggestion by one of the pool photographers that participating news organizations share the cost of equipment, such as a portable dark room and a negative transmitter, which could be stored at Andrews AFB for ready access in a deployment. Other equipment essential for smooth transmission of pool products, such as satellite up-link gear, might also be acquired and stored in the same manner.

16. All pool-assigned reporters and photographers, not only bureau chiefs, should attend quarterly Pentagon sessions where problems can be discussed and rules and responsibilities underscored.

17. Public Affairs Officers from Unified Commands should meet periodically with pool-assigned reporters and photographers with whom they might have to work in some future crises.