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SHAPING THE AIR FORCE NARRATIVE FOR THE 21st CENTURY

by

John V. Bartoli, Major, USAF

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Advisor: Dr. Edwina S. Campbell

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Abstract

As the Air Force matured and grew increasingly more sophisticated, primarily spurred by enormous technological innovation, its unrepachable identity continued to flourish in the public mind. Air Force relationships with traditional media, though never warm, were nonetheless reasonably collegial, but more importantly, practical. The military's experiences with the media during Viet Nam drove cautious tolerance left of outright disdain among the services and ushered in three and half decades of contempt between the two camps.

Redefining its responsibilities regarding the need to engage traditional media, educating, training, and empowering its Airmen and exploring opportunities to exploit "new media" are essential to the Air Force's ability to advance the national defense imperatives of airpower to global audiences. By taking advantage of emerging media phenomena such as social networking, and streaming internet video, the Air Force can again draw benefit from its professional reputation and the allure of its high-technology persona to reinvigorate its communication strategy.

Introduction

America's conventional military dominance is so pronounced that no military force in the world is likely to challenge American interests by directly confronting its forces in conventional military operations in the near term. Instead, entities hostile to the US will use irregular means to frustrate American interests. Central to any non-conventional threat is the adversarial targeting of public opinion – opponents of the US have, and will continue to strike where the US has found it difficult to defend itself: in the information domain, employing fear and misinformation tactics that consequently have strategic effects.

The Air Force must change the way it communicates with the American people through traditional news media such as print and television, as well as through emerging practices such as blogging and internet video. While the Air Force has begun to experiment with blogging and is beginning to make more extensive use of internet video, the most desperately needed changes are in the way the Air Force trains and educates its Airmen with respect to communicating with the American people through the press or more directly through internet-based social networking tools and personal, day-to-day interaction with citizens. This education must stress the role of the free press in a democratic society as well as the differences between the military and journalistic institutions within the US in order to achieve and maintain a more productive relationship between the Air Force and the press.

This paper employs the problem-solution research methodology to develop communication strategy options to candidly and effectively convey the Air Force narrative relative to its importance to joint operations. Historical case studies, beginning with the Viet Nam War, and continuing through the current military engagements in Iraq and Afghanistan, are employed to frame the communication strategy deficiencies. The military-media relationship relative to Viet

Nam is particularly useful because it highlights the origins of contentious relations between the US military and the American media. Military operations conducted in the 1980s, specifically the US military interventions in Grenada and Panama, illustrate how the problem evolved, as frustration and mistrust deepened between military leaders and media professionals. Similarly, examples from Operations DESERT STORM (ODS), IRAQI FREEDOM (OIF), and ENDURING FREEDOM (OEF) highlight the progress made in military-media relations, as well as persistent and emerging problems that currently complicate the military's media interaction.

While history provides excellent information that helps frame the problems that confront the military with media relations, the solutions reside in the study of the changing information environment and emerging mass communications techniques, in addition to the historical military cases that help define the problem.

The Need to Reform Military-Media Relations

The challenges facing the Air Force and its sister services in the current information environment are daunting. In the near term, it is likely that US military forces will find themselves facing enemies who will wage irregular warfare to oppose US interests. US Marine Corps General James N. Mattis, Commander of US Joint Forces Command (USJFCOM), told the House Armed Services Committee on 20 March 2009 that "I am absolutely certain that irregular warfare will be with us in future conflicts...One thing is clear. We must make irregular warfare a core competency; and this is Joint Forces Command's top priority, right now."¹ Linda Robinson, Senior Writer for *US News and World Report*, speaking at a Center for Strategic & International Studies Panel in November 2005 stated that the true center of gravity in irregular warfare rests "in the minds of the populations...both abroad and in the United States, rather than in a military force or industrial base." During the same panel, retired Major General Geoffrey

Lambert, former commander of US Army Special Forces, Airborne, added that non-kinetic effects in irregular warfare that could allow a force to affect the resolve of a population represented a "true revolution in military affairs".² Yet, after the 2007 personnel drawdown, the Air Force had reduced its force of 453 public affairs officers³ to 273.⁴ In an environment where non-kinetic battles will be fought in the minds of populations, the Air Force must take a new approach to communications. The 40% cut in public affairs makes it imperative that every Airman become a communicator.

Airmen must improve their ability to communicate with the American people through the traditional mass communications outlets, primarily television and print news. In order to do this, the Air Force must critically examine its relationship with mass communications outlets and overcome its communication aversion. Furthermore, the Air Force must accept the current information environment in which embedded and unilateral reporters in a combat zone can use satellite communications to transmit information in near real time, making it impossible for the military to control the transmission of news from a combat zone. According to Mr. Robert Potter, a retired Air Force Colonel and public affairs officer who currently works at the Air Force Research Institute as a communications specialist and researcher, these changes, most of which manifest themselves via the internet in the form of social networking sites and blogs, present both a challenge to the Air Force as well as an opportunity to more directly and more personally communicate with the American people about how Airmen contribute to ongoing operations, particularly in OIF and OEF.⁵

The US Air Force has much room for improvement when it comes to media relations. The service needs to implement a multi-layered approach to repair relations with existing media

entities and win and hold the hearts and minds of the American public in order to buy the time desperately needed to conduct successful irregular warfare and stability operations.

The first target of this multi-layered approach is the array of traditional news media. There is friction and suspicion between the military and the American news media. It is necessary to thoroughly understand the nature of this friction in order to formulate a solution to the problem.

Jill Arraf, CNN's senior Baghdad correspondent said of the military - media relationship since the major combat phase of OIF, said "A couple of things have stood out to me in covering the military over the last two years in Iraq. One is that we are still a long way from trusting each other there on the ground – the other is that we have never needed each other more."⁶

History of Military-Press Relations and the Current State of the Relationship

A 2004 RAND study on battlefield reporting authored by Christopher Paul and James J. Kim gives several reasons for concluding that tension between the press and the military is inevitable. These reasons include differences in mission focus and institutional characteristics.

The press, according to Paul and Kim, exists to collect, edit, and report the news in its role as the "4th Estate."⁷ This means that the press, while not a formal organ of government, performs an important role in a democratic society by informing the population on the processes and the results of government operations. Another mission focus of the press is less philosophical than practical: generate a profit. This profit motive may, as Dr. Michael Schudson, a sociologist on the faculty of The Journalism School of Columbia University⁸ lead to "serious defects in American journalism."⁹ An anonymous reporter cited in a 2005 McCormick Tribune Conference Series Report supports Schudson's statement when he said that economics sometimes drives television journalists to cover violent events that aid insurgents' information operations objectives in Iraq. "For TV there's a flash-bang ratio that's a component of

infotainment and image-driven TV news' that squeezes out long-term and evolving stories.”¹⁰

The intent of this paragraph is not to impugn the integrity of American television or newspaper journalists. However, Air Force members must understand the goals of the press establishment in order to foster a relationship that accommodates the press and supports the Air Force's need for OPSEC and effective public affairs support to information operations.

In contrast to the press establishment's mission focus, the military's mission focus, as stated by Paul and Kim, is to defend the United States. Military success is achieved by linking individual military successes at the operational and tactical levels of war, and OPSEC can, in large part, contribute to success or failure.¹¹ It is the conflict between the press's mission to report news and the military's desire to preserve operational security that creates a significant source of tension: access to military members, information, and operations for journalists.¹²

It is not enough for the Air Force to understand the mission focus of the journalists who will report on their activities. Airmen must also understand the differences in the institutional characteristics between the two organizations. Paul and Kim describe the military as organized hierarchically, with strict and formal chains of command that culminate with the President. Military efforts are fundamentally cooperative, with the goals and objectives of individual units oriented toward supporting common goals.¹³ Competition between the services does exist, however it is normally at the highest levels of command for budget priorities or credit for accomplishments. At the operational and tactical level, there is a fundamental sense of cooperation.¹⁴ This is not true in the press.

The RAND study defines the press not as one entity, but as a collection of organizations that, when considered together, share certain characteristics. The press is not a hierarchical, monolithic organization like the military. It is a horizontal and competitive entity comprised of

“thousands of reporters working for hundreds of different news outlets, each with potentially different aims and goals and different views of what it means to be part of ‘the press.’”¹⁵ These differences contribute to the tension between the military and the press.

As a result of these differences and the military’s inability to understand and communicate with journalists, military-media relations have been plagued by friction and suspicion on both sides. Table 1, excerpted from the 2004 RAND study, summarizes issues relating to news coverage of the operations and the military-media legacy in the wake of those operations beginning with the Viet Nam War and ending with the major combat phase of OIF.

The Viet Nam War left journalists and the media with “a mutual lasting and bitter legacy of mistrust and skepticism.”¹⁶ At the root of the problem were the different objectives of the between reporters and the military. When the Johnson administration and military leadership attempted to sustain popular support for the war by presenting the American people, through the news media, with optimistic reports of combat with conservative body counts, the press used its access to televise and report graphic images that undermined the official government story. The 1968 Tet Offensive exposed the military’s optimistic assessments of communist manpower as falsehood and fueled the press’s mistrust of the military, who came to judge the press as subversive and unpatriotic.¹⁷ One of the lessons that military leaders extracted from their Viet Nam experience was to maintain much greater control of press access.

Table 1. Summary of Operations, Press Issues, and Legacies

Conflict	Issue Regarding News Coverage	Legacy
Vietnam	Press feels military has betrayed its trust; military is unhappy with coverage	Long-standing mutual mistrust
Grenada	Military focuses on need for operational security; press is denied access	Press pools
Panama	Press pool is not properly implemented because of logistical problems	Further reform
First Gulf War	Press is given limited access, censorship, "spoon feeding"; military takes a more proactive role in seeking to use news coverage for its own benefit	Legal pressure
Somalia	Press gains access before military humanitarian operation begins; military is unhappy with some of the resulting coverage	The press "turns the tables"
Haiti	Press again gains access before operation begins, but coverage is more satisfactory to military	Cooperation
Bosnia	First use of embedded press system, though on a small scale	Precedent set for expanded use of embedded press
Kosovo	Press cannot easily cover air war; enemy central command provides its own information to media	Importance of independent press versus enemy propaganda
Afghanistan	Difficulty in covering special operations; press complains about restrictions on access	Pressure to allow some access to operations regardless of type
Major combat operations of OIF	Embedded press versus unilaterals; other topics documented later in this book	Expectation of embedded press for future operations

In 1983, when the US launched Operation URGENT FURY in Grenada, military commanders excluded the press from covering the operation altogether, prompting the press to understandably claim that its First Amendment rights had been violated. As a result, the DoD commissioned the Sidle commission to review the department's press policy. The commission devised several recommendations, including the establishment of a media pools to cover military operations and the concurrent planning of public affairs with operational planning.¹⁸

During the 1989 invasion of Panama, the first major military operation after the Sidle Commission's report, the military poorly implemented the press pool concept. Activation of the pool was delayed for hours and military commanders in Panama were not notified of the impending influx of journalists and were not prepared to ensure that the journalists had access to the battlefield. Even worse, reporters who were not part of the official press pool were able to obtain better coverage by acting unilaterally. The primary reason that Paul and Kim cite for the failure of the press pool during the Panama invasion were logistical and procedural errors in

implementing the concept and not deliberate stonewalling. Nevertheless, additional calls for access from the press spurred General Colin Powell, then the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS), to remind commanders that the public affairs aspect of military operations deserved their personal attention.¹⁹

US military forces learned a bitter lesson in 1999 during Operation ALLIED FORCE. This air centric conflict was difficult for the media to cover. They could film aircraft taking off and landing, but could not freely roam the battlefield because NATO forces did not control the ground in Serbia. The military withheld access to reporters, citing OPSEC and pilot safety concerns. This created an opportunity for Slobodan Milosevic. Without access to US military operations, reporters found an alternative source of information in the Serbian leader. Serb forces allowed the press access to sites of collateral damage from US air strikes, while hiding activities associated with ethnic cleansing. Said allied commander Admiral James Ellis: “The enemy deliberately and criminally killed innocents by the thousands, but no one saw it...We accidentally killed innocents, sometimes by the dozens, and the world watched it on the evening news.”²⁰

Indeed, it was not until the major combat phase of OIF that US forces took a proactive, formalized approach to integrating journalists with military units engaged in high intensity combat. The DoD accommodated more than 700 embedded journalists, offering military training to journalists who had no prior experience covering combat operations.²¹ The press had access to the battlefield and the military agreed not to review or censor the reports from the field. The arrangement between the press and the military during the major combat phase of OIF was successful from the military’s standpoint as well as from the news media’s.

There was some dissonance between the military and journalists such as a few cases of irresponsible journalism in which reporters revealed the exact location of some coalition units, as well as what Paul and Kim called the “week-two jitters” when press reports portrayed a pessimistic view of events despite the fact that the military operation was proceeding well. In all, however, the military and press both considered this arrangement successful. The military’s credibility was enhanced when embedded reporters transmitted footage from the battlefield that directly contradicted propaganda from the Iraqi Minister of Information. For its part, reporters benefitted from being able to cooperate with each other and share their information in the theater, which enabled newspapers and television networks to combine accounts from embeds with other news from official defense briefings to produce more comprehensive news.²²

Since 2003, however, much of the progress made in the relationship between the press and the military has given way to increased frustration and mistrust. After an impressive, successful major combat phase with accompanying positive coverage, a bloody insurgency in Iraq has generated more negative stories. The Abu Ghraib prison scandal broke, causing more negative coverage, including pictures broadcast worldwide of US soldiers abusing Iraqi prisoners. The military began complaining of negative coverage and the media again found itself fighting for access and information.

The Credibility Gap and How the Air Force Can Help Close It

In advance of the 2005 McCormick Conference on the military – media relationship, the McCormick Tribune Foundation commissioned the Gallup Organization to measure public perceptions of the military, media, and the Iraq war. Ralph Begleiter, distinguished journalist in residence at the University of Delaware who moderated the 2005 McCormick Conference on the military – media relationship, cited some of the Gallup results.

When 77 percent of the public believes the military intentionally gives false information and 49 percent believe the military sometimes ought to intentionally give false information, I would suggest that everybody in this room (military and press) has an educating job to do with the American people.

And look at the other side. Seventy percent believe the media are too critical, while only 20 percent of the public believe the media are balanced. So there's a credibility gap, both on the media side and on the military side.²³

In order for the Air Force to do its part to correct this credibility gap, it must educate and train its Airmen to communicate. Regardless of the medium through which the Airman attempts to communicate, be it a traditional medium such as television or print news or a newer medium such as blogging or social networking, the Airman will probably not be able to communicate effectively, at least not in a manner that is likely to advance the Air Force's interests, without being educated in how to communicate for effect.²⁴ This means that the Air Force must train and empower Airmen to influence the public debate about, generate public awareness of, and achieve advocacy for the Air Force.²⁵

According to Potter, for junior enlisted men and officers, this means educating them on the nature of the press and the Air Force's relationship with the press, exposing them to the different media they can use to communicate, as well as some basic ground rules such as OPSEC, safeguarding classified information, and what topics of discussion are appropriate for different venues. At these junior levels, Airmen should be comfortable with discussing what they do in the Air Force, why that is important to the Air Force, and how they play a role in the defense of the country. Senior Air Force officers, on the other hand should be expected to discuss policy issues as they relate to military operations with every segment of the public, including the press, political elites, or the American population at large.²⁶

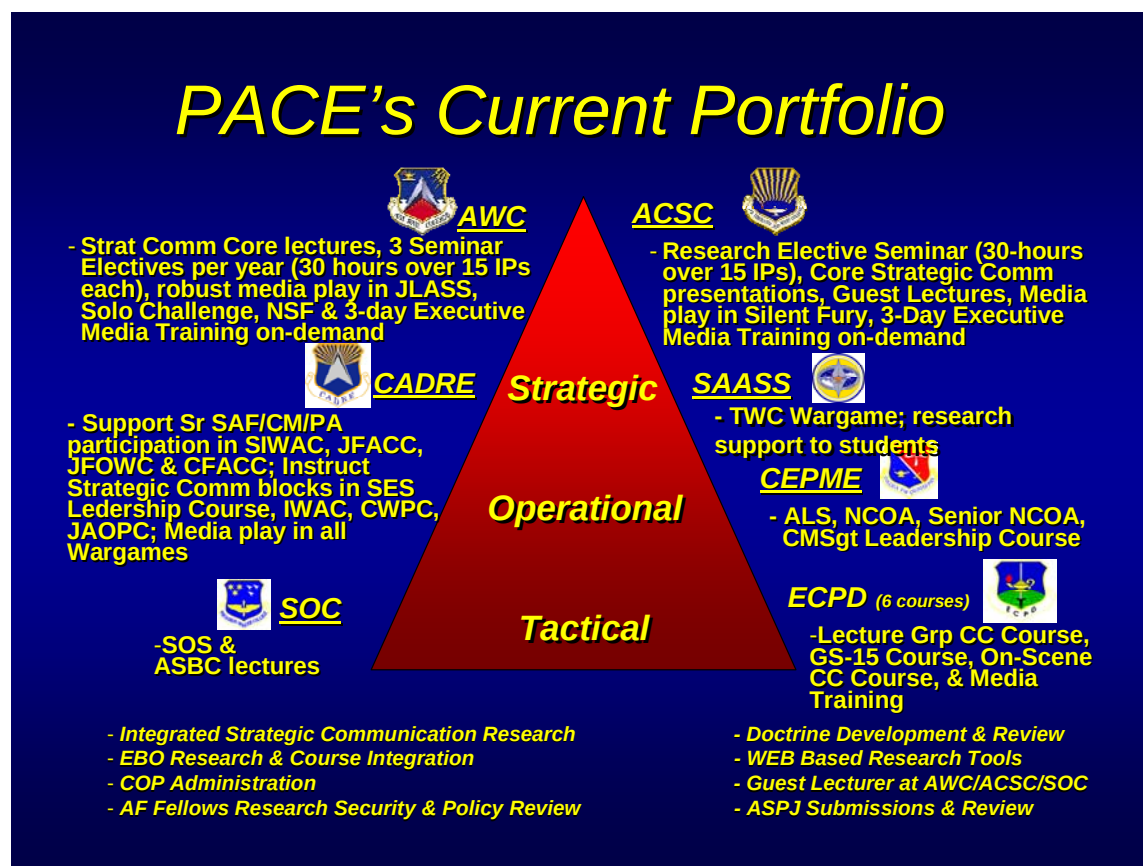


Figure 1. Air Force Public Affairs Center of Excellence Support to Air University

Air University and the Public Affairs Center of Excellence (PACE) located at Maxwell AFB, Alabama identified the need in for such education in a 2006 staff study at the direction of then-Lieutenant General Stephen R. Lorenz when he served as Air University Commander.²⁷ Figure 1 illustrates PACE support to Air University at different levels of Air Force education for officers and enlisted at different stages of their careers. PACE's recommendation calls for "developing coursework in persuasion, perception development, public speaking, information operations, public affairs and media engagement, audience assessment, cultural and language considerations" throughout the entire Air University catalog.²⁸ Changes within Air University, including the decision to close its College of Aerospace Doctrine Research and Education

(CADRE) and the resulting reorganization to continue some of the courses that CADRE provides, has slowed the implementation of these initiatives.²⁹ These educational initiatives will improve the ability of Airmen to communicate to the American people through the press or through the internet, and are necessary measures for improving the ability of Airmen to communicate. Education is not enough, however. The Air Force must also change its culture that has, according to PACE's Potter, produced generations of Airmen averse to communicating to the public, whether that public is political leadership, news media, or grassroots communication with ordinary citizens. The Air Force must empower Airmen to communicate.³⁰

Military officers' aversion to communicating, particularly through the press, is well documented. The 2005 Gallup study commissioned by the McCormick Tribune Foundation found that only 27% of military officers are comfortable speaking to the media on the record regarding DoD policy, compared with 68% answered that they were either somewhat uncomfortable or very uncomfortable. 51% of the respondents answered that they were very uncomfortable speaking to the press on the record. Furthermore, 73% of the officers who participated in the study claimed to be somewhat or very uncomfortable discussing policy with the press even if the conversation was off the record.³¹ Bradley Graham, the Pentagon correspondent for the *Washington Post*, said of interviewing officers working in Washington D.C.: "We often have layers and layers of public affairs people to go through. I had one interview last week where there were about 10 people involved in the briefing, and four of them were public affairs officers."³² Finally, Army Brigadier General Carter Ham, deputy director of regional operations for the JCS said "I'll state for the record that while I like the media, I'm very uncomfortable serving around the media."³³

The author of this paper interviewed five current or former public affairs officers during the course of the research, one of whom is PACE's Mr. Potter, who mentioned the Air Force's cultural reticence regarding communications. All five public affairs officers agreed that Airmen tend to be uncomfortable communicating with the press. Captain Corinna Jones, Deputy Director of Public Affairs for Combined Joint Task Force Horn of Africa said that "I believe part of the issue is the Air Force breeds risk-averse officers and dealing with the media is risky. Empowerment to work with the media and understanding the media has to start from the top and work down to the most junior troops."³⁴ Mr. DeJon Redd, former Chief of Public Affairs for the 355th Wing, Davis-Monthan Air Force Base, Arizona added:

The military has cleaved tenaciously to the Viet Nam era mindset that employs OPSEC as a smokescreen. I witnessed this on more than one occasion, at Davis-Monthan particularly, where our wing just flat screwed up in a way that was too public to hide. Instead of coming clean or "going ugly early" as the adage goes, we pulled the OPSEC card and waited for the story to go away. Given our proximity to Tucson, Arizona and the political climate there, this approach created strained relations between the base and the local media.³⁵

In order to overcome this aversion to communication, the Air Force must tolerate mistakes and dissent from within. The education that PACE envisions, along with training that will be described in the next section should, over time, build confidence of Airmen to communicate confidently and openly with the public. However, that confidence will not develop if Airmen fear that a making a mistake or expressing dissent with the press or in a blog will damage their opportunities for career advancement.

On April 28, 2008, Secretary of Defense Robert M. Gates addressed cadets at the US Military Academy. During his address, Secretary Gates said "Candor and credibility remain indispensable, because we will see yet more irregular and difficult conflicts, of varying types, in the years ahead; conflicts where the traditional duties of an officer are accompanied by real

dilemmas.” Additionally, Gates lauded the Army for fostering a culture in which loyal dissent is tolerated:

I have been impressed by the way the Army's professional journals allow some of our brightest and most innovative officers to critique – sometimes bluntly – the way the service does business; to include judgments about senior leadership, both military and civilian. I believe this is a sign of institutional vitality and health and strength. I encourage you to take on the mantle of fearless, thoughtful, but loyal dissent when the situation calls for it. And agree with the articles or not, senior officers should embrace such dissent as healthy dialogue and protect and advance those considerably more junior who are taking on that mantle.³⁶

The Air Force must embrace the same mindset lest its Airmen continue to resist communicating.

Once the Air Force has educated its Airmen on how to be effective communicators and empowered them to be such, it will have to provide continuing training that will enable them to maintain their skills. Training that allows for direct engagement between journalists and Airmen via a focused program would aid both institutions. USJFCOM's Joint Public Affairs Support Element (JPASE), which declared initial operational capability in April 2006, is currently charged with providing public affairs training and media simulation. As a joint public affairs focal point for doctrine development and training, JPASE is ideally suited to coordinating support this kind of training.³⁷

During an address to the Subcommittee on Terrorism, Unconventional Threats and Capabilities, of the US House of Representatives Armed Services Committee, Captain Hal Pittman, Acting Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Joint Communication, lauded JPASE for been fully integrated into the U.S. Joint Forces Command's Combatant Command training and mission rehearsal program.³⁸ An ideal opportunity for expanding JPASE's impact and integrating its media simulators along with actual members of the press into training at the service level exists in the form of the Joint Air Operations Planning Course (JAOP) conducted

by Air University at Maxwell Air Force Base, Alabama. This course trains Airmen on how to plan air operations at the campaign level. It begins with a review of Air Force doctrine and teaches officers from different career fields how to process strategic guidance in the form of the Joint Force Commander's and Air Component Commander's intent and develop operational objectives, courses of action, and ultimately the tactical objectives that support them. Students must consider issues such as collateral damage and air support for stabilization operations. The course culminates with a student-developed air operations plan and its presentation to a senior Air Force officer.

By integrating journalists or JPASE media simulation support into such training and planning, Airmen could practice applying their communication skills in an academic setting, while journalists unfamiliar with covering military operations could gain an understanding of how the Air Force approaches joint operations planning and execution.³⁹

The Air Force should also invite journalists to, or request JPASE media simulation teams for exercises such as Red Flag, so Airmen and reporters can interact in a setting that closely replicates the stress and tempo of a real combat air operation. Part of this training should include viewing Red Flag missions from the Nellis Air Force Base Air Operations Center (AOC). The intent of this training is to expose the Airmen planning and executing the mission to the questions that arise from the journalists during the course of the exercise. Additionally, it will offer members of the press with little experience covering military operations exposure to realistic combat training, while offering press members experienced in military coverage a chance to keep abreast of evolving issues in coalition air operations.⁴⁰ Such training, believes Captain David Faggard, Chief of Emerging Technology at the Air Force Public Affairs Agency, would help Airmen develop a habit of communicating for effect through the press and contribute

to the establishment of a trend of increased comfort on the part of Air Force leadership to accommodate the press with greater access during peacetime and contingency operations.⁴¹

The Changing Communications Landscape and Emerging Opportunities

Shaping the Air Force narrative by communicating to the American people through traditional news sources is still a viable strategy for the service to pursue, despite a great deal of excitement regarding new media such as internet news, streaming video, and blogs. A Zogby poll conducted in February 2008 found that 48% of respondents named the internet as their primary source of news. Television news was the primary source of 29% of the respondents, though 77% of the respondents still view television as an important, if not primary, source of news. While only 10% identified newspapers as their primary source, 70% also identified newspapers as an important source of news.⁴²

Couple the rise of the internet as the primary news source with a February 2009 Pew Research Center study that noted a significant decline in the reporting power of the mainstream media, evidenced by the reduction in newspapers accredited to cover Congress by two thirds⁴³ and a sharp rise in niche media or narrowly-focused special interest publications and the decline in *New York Times* daily circulation by 13.5% since 2001, and it is apparent that the media landscape is shifting.⁴⁴ While television is slipping as the primary source of news for Americans and newspaper circulation is declining, YouTube is playing 100 million videos per day and is the most frequently-visited American video site.⁴⁵

Captain Faggard of the Air Force Public Affairs Agency notes that this shift constitutes an opportunity for Airmen to take advantage of new media to communicate the Air Force Story to the American people via social networking sites such as Facebook or MySpace and video sites, such as YouTube.⁴⁶ The Gallup study commissioned by the McCormick Tribune Foundation

supports his claim. 77% of public respondents to the Gallup survey expressed an interest in terrorist threats to the US. 69% of those respondents were interested in hearing stories regarding the performance of the US military during the war and 60% desired information on human casualties in the conflict.⁴⁷ The Gallup numbers indicate that the demand for this information exists and, according to a new media guide compiled by the Air Force Public Affairs Agency titled “New Media and the Air Force,” there are thousands of Airmen who are already in position to supply it. The service has compiled metrics that indicate that 70% of Airmen use YouTube, while 50% of Airmen use the Facebook social networking site and 75% use MySpace.⁴⁸

The Air Force has already established a presence on YouTube called BlueTube for Airmen to post videos that range from informative to poignant to funny.⁴⁹ “New Media and the Air Force” provides several recommendations for Airman who wish to communicate via BlueTube and sites such as MySpace and Facebook. The guidance is basic and includes disclaimers regarding OPSEC and classified information, as well as admonishments to refrain from posting pornographic material or offensive material.⁵⁰

While the technical infrastructure exists, Airmen are using it, and there is some official Air Force guidance for Airmen who choose to participate, the approach is not integrated. The Air Force must work with its sister services to develop an integrated, aggressive approach to communicating through these new media, said Faggard.⁵¹ The personal nature of blogging and the posting of personal videos can enable Airmen to engage in a dialogue with each other and with civilians, instead of the one-way information flow offered by traditional news coverage in television and print news. An integrated approach to new media by the Air Force should systematically analyze the interests in specific topics and aggressively match Airmen who have the right story to tell to the interested party. If the Air Force educates and empowers every

Airman to be a communicator, the honest and effective dialogues established among Airmen and citizens serve the long term interests of the public and the Air Force.

Summary and Conclusions

The Air Force must change the way it communicates with the American people through both old and new media. The most glaring areas of deficiency is in the training and education of its Airmen with respect to communicating to the American people through the press or more directly through internet-based social networking tools and personal, day-to-day interaction with citizens. This education must stress the role of the free press in a democratic society as well as the differences between the military and journalistic institutions within the US in order to achieve and maintain a more productive relationship between the Air Force and the press.

The ability to communicate candidly and openly, while not compromising classified communication or OPSEC is imperative to improving the service's ability to communicate with all segments of the public and helping to maintain public support for military operations across the globe. The ability of Airmen to convey to the American people and its political leaders is paramount, given the ability of recent adversaries to strike at the friendly center of gravity that is the resolve of our people to support military operations.

Regardless of the medium, the Air Force must empower its Airmen to tell their versions of the Air Force story. It must break the existing culture that attaches risk to communication and become more tolerant of mistakes and loyal dissent. Without a change in culture that teaches and encourages every Airman to be a communicator, the promise offered by the rapidly evolving communications technology will go unfulfilled and the battle for hearts and minds might be lost.

Notes

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- ¹ Defence Talk, “Military Must Develop Irregular Warfare Capability, Commander Says,” DefenceTalk.com, http://www.defencetalk.com/news/publish/defence/Military_Must_Develop_Irregular_Warfare_Capability_Commander_Says30017364.php
- ² Center for Strategic and International Studies, “The Future of the US Military and Irregular Warfare,” CSIS, http://www.csis.org/component/option,com_csis_events/task,view/id,779/
- ³ United States Air Force, “Officer Career Fields,” <http://www.af.mil/news/airman/0206/career-officer.shtml> (Chicago, 17.237)
- ⁴ United States Air Force, “Officer Career Fields,” <http://www.af.mil/news/airman/0208/career-officer.shtml> (Chicago, 17.237)
- ⁵ Mr. Robert A. Potter, Air Force Research Institute, discussion, 11 Mar 09.
- ⁶ Christopher Paul and James J. Kim, *Reporters on the Battlefield: The Embedded Press System in Historical Context*, (Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation: 2004), 24.
- ⁷ Ibid., 9.
- ⁸ The Journalism School, Columbia University, “Michael Schudson,” Columbia University, http://www.journalism.columbia.edu/cs/ContentServer/jrn/1165270051276/JRN_Profile_C/1165270082820/JRNFacultyDetail.htm.
- ⁹ Michael Schudson, *The Power of News*, (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1995), 4.
- ¹⁰ McCormick Tribune Conference Series Conference Report, “The Military-Media Relationship 2005,” (Chicago: McCormick Tribune Foundation), 31.
- ¹¹ Christopher Paul and James J. Kim, *Reporters on the Battlefield: The Embedded Press System in Historical Context*, (Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation: 2004), 18.
- ¹² Ibid., 22.
- ¹³ Ibid., 18.
- ¹⁴ Ibid., 19.
- ¹⁵ Ibid., 11.
- ¹⁶ Ibid., 36.
- ¹⁷ Ibid., 38.
- ¹⁸ Ibid., 40.
- ¹⁹ Ibid., 41.
- ²⁰ Ibid., 50.
- ²¹ Ibid., 55.
- ²² Ibid., 57.
- ²³ McCormick Tribune Conference Series Conference Report, “The Military-Media Relationship 2005,” (Chicago: McCormick Tribune Foundation), 47.
- ²⁴ Mr. Robert A. Potter, Air Force Research Institute, discussion, 11 Mar 09.
- ²⁵ Air University College of Aerospace Doctrine, Research, and Education, staff study, 10 Dec 06, 10.
- ²⁶ Mr. Robert A. Potter, Air Force Research Institute, discussion, 11 Mar 09.
- ²⁷ Air University College of Aerospace Doctrine, Research, and Education, staff study, 10 Dec 06, 10.
- ²⁸ Ibid., 11.
- ²⁹ Mr. Robert A. Potter, Air Force Research Institute, discussion, 11 Mar 09.
- ³⁰ Ibid.
- ³¹ McCormick Tribune Conference Series Conference Report, “The Military-Media Relationship 2005,” (Chicago: McCormick Tribune Foundation), 64.
- ³² Ibid., 20.

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- ³³ Ibid., 28.
- ³⁴ Capt Corinna Jones, Deputy Director of Public Affairs, Combined Joint Task Force Horn of Africa, interviewed by author 26 March 2009.
- ³⁵ Mr. DeJon Redd, former Director of Public Affairs, 355th Wing, Davis-Monthan Air Force Base, AZ, interviewed by author 26 March 2009.
- ³⁶ Robert M. Gates, Secretary of Defense (address, US Military Academy, West Point, NY, 21 April 2008).
- ³⁷ JFCOM, “Joint Public Affairs Support Element (JPASE)”, JFCOM website, http://www.jfcom.mil/about/abt_jpase.htm.
- ³⁸ Captain Hal Pittman, Acting Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Joint Communications, (statement to US House of Representatives Armed Forces Committee, Subcommittee on Terrorism, Unconventional Threats and Capabilities, 15 November 2007).
- ³⁹ David C. Ausiello, “Operational Commanders: It’s Time to Take Command...of the Media.” Research Report no. ADA414636. (Newport, RI: Naval War College, 2003): 28.
- ⁴⁰ Frank Aukofer and William P. Lawrence. *America’s Team: The Odd Couple*. (Nashville, TN: The Freedom Forum First Amendment Center, 1995.)
- ⁴¹ Capt David Faggard, Chief of Emerging Technology, HAF Public Affairs, interviewed by author 3 April 2009.
- ⁴² Zogby, “Traditional Journalism is Out of Touch,” Zogby International, <http://www.zogby.com/news/ReadNews.cfm?ID=1454>
- ⁴³ Pew Research Center, “The New Face of Washington’s Press Corps,” Pew Research Center, 11 February 2009, <http://pewresearch.org/pubs/1115/Washington-press-corps-study>.
- ⁴⁴ Project for Excellence in Journalism 2009, “Audience,” Journalism.org, http://www.stateofthenewsmedia.org/2009/narrative_newspapers_audience.php.
- ⁴⁵ BBC. “YouTube Hits 100M Videos Today,” BBC News, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/technology/5186618.stm>
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- ⁴⁷ McCormick Tribune Conference Series Conference Report, “The Military-Media Relationship 2005,” (Chicago: McCormick Tribune Foundation), 47.
- ⁴⁸ Air Force Public Affairs Agency, “New Media and the Air Force,” US Air Force, 13.
- ⁴⁹ Ibid., 10.
- ⁵⁰ Ibid., 17.
- ⁵¹ David Faggard, Chief of Emerging Technology, HAF Public Affairs, interviewed by author 3 April 2009.

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