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*The Army Lessons  
Learned Centre*

# DISPATCHES

Lessons Learned for Soldiers

## MEDIA RELATIONS

**This issue of Dispatches was originally produced in March 1997. With the current emphasis of the CF being placed upon Operation ABACUS, CF support to the Year 2000 problem, it is felt that the information contained herein remains both relevant and worth reiteration.**



J Petryk  
Lieutenant-Colonel  
Director  
Army Lessons Learned Centre

## **DIRECTOR'S FOREWORD**

***"Four hostile newspapers are more to be feared than a thousand bayonets"***  
- Napoleon -

Unfortunately, this statement rings true for many of us in the army today. Subjected to daily bombardment by the media, defence critics and special interest groups, it is easy to question whether we have any supporters left.

Like other factors to be considered in an estimate, the presence of news media is an operational reality and thus public affairs concerns must be incorporated into mission planning, preparation and execution. This reality is not a new phenomenon, in fact, news correspondents have been covering military operations since Napoleonic times.

There's no question that army leaders of all ranks must learn how to deal effectively with the news media. Ignoring the news media will not make them go away, in fact, it will simply drive them "underground." They will obtain their information from *unofficial* sources and we will have lost the ability to influence the coverage of our activities. Journalists will cover military operations to the greatest extent possible and, as in past conflicts, many will lose their lives in the process. We should not underestimate their tenacity.

We can best prepare ourselves by seeking to understand the roles and capabilities of the news media. If possible, we should get to know those journalists who cover military operations while accepting the fact that their presence is not only inevitable but desirable. The technological capability of the media and its potential impact must be clearly understood. Furthermore, we must not only recognize what the media can do but also what they need. Providing the resources and the training necessary for effective media relations will serve to increase public understanding and support for our activities.



P.A. Cunningham  
Lieutenant-Colonel  
Director

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## **PART ONE - INTRODUCTION**

***"The pressure was unbearable. My trembling hands betrayed my attempts to show confidence as I clung to my rifle in desperation. The feeling of nausea was overwhelming and it made me feel dizzy. Swallowing hard, I tried to blink the sweat from my eyes. What was going to happen next? Truth is, I didn't know. What I did know was that I wasn't trained to deal with this situation and that my rifle would be of no use to me!"***

No, this passage wasn't taken from a sci-fi novel, but it describes what many soldiers go through when about to be interviewed by the media. We fear that things we say could ruin our careers or, more importantly, that we could accidentally compromise an operation and put lives at risk. Suddenly, we remember those old war-time posters proclaiming that "loose lips sink ships." Now, as the journalist approaches with microphone and camera, are we overcome with that same sinking feeling, or are we preparing to "fix bayonets"?

The purpose of this edition of *Dispatches* is to provide soldiers with a basic understanding of our communications and public affairs policy, the workings of the media, as well as to provide some useful tips on dealing with the media in today's information-hungry environment. This edition is not meant to be the definitive publication on media relations for the army. It is an aide-mémoire, current in information at the time of publication. In any instance of interpretation, the relevant QR&Os, CFAOs and official policy directives take precedence. When in doubt, refer to the reference list included in this edition for further information and consult your nearest Public Affairs Officer (PAffO).



## **PART TWO - DEFINITIONS**

The Army Lessons Learned Centre uses three terms in describing the Lessons Learned Process. The following definitions have not changed since their approval for inclusion in DISPATCHES Vol 1.

- ▶ **OBSERVATION.** An observation is simply recorded raw data that takes place during an operation or exercise. Observations come from many sources such as existing Canadian and Allied PORs, PXR, UNMO reports and from commanders and their staffs.
- ▶ **ISSUE.** An issue is a topic that develops from one or more observations or recurring observations. For example, when a battle group comments adversely on a piece of equipment that was previously reported by another unit, this becomes an issue for the staff to resolve.
- ▶ **LESSON LEARNED.** A lesson learned is an issue that results in a change to Canadian doctrine, tactics, SOPs, organization or equipment. Lessons Learned are staffed through the Land Force Development Process for approval.

### **GLOSSARY OF PUBLIC AFFAIRS TERMS**

**Official statements.** Information which can be identified as coming from an official spokesperson such as the commander or the PAffO.

**On-the-record.** Remarks that may be quoted directly or indirectly and may be attributed to a specific individual, such as a soldier describing his or her job. **Army spokespersons remarks are always on-the-record!**

**Off-the-record.** Such remarks or information are to be held in strict confidence and not used in any form. A journalist is not prevented from getting the same information from another source and using it. **Off-the-record remarks are not to be given by army spokespersons.**

**Background.** Remarks that may be attributed only if a non-specific source is named, eg., "a military spokesperson said that..."

**Not for attribution or Deep background.** Information that may be used, without mentioning a specific source. The journalist may publish on their own authority without any attribution to a specific source.

**Indirect quotes.** These are paraphrases (expressing a statement in other words) of what was said. They will capture the meaning of what was said, but do not come from an identifiable source.

**Freelance correspondent.** A media representative who sells his/her services as a writer, photographer, etc., without a long-term commitment or contract.

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***"The media give you a chance to tell your story. You never get a second chance to create a first impression."***

*Col G. Anderson, USMC Deputy Director*

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**Media or News media.** The term encompasses print, radio, television, news wire services, networks and publishing organizations.

**Media representative.** A journalist, photographer, etc., who is employed full or part-time by a bona fide media organization and has the credentials for that organization.

**Media escort.** An experienced and qualified officer (or NCO) assigned to accompany and support a war correspondent or small groups of war correspondents in area of operations.

**Media accreditation.** The formal recognition by national authorities of the registration of a media representative to act as a war correspondent. The process involves the issuing of an identity card and identifying insignia which entitles the accredited war correspondent to the protection of the Geneva Convention.

**Media response line (MRL).** A communications and public affairs staff-coordinated response to a question from a media representative. Note: formerly called Response to queries (RTQ).

**News.** News is whatever the journalist says is news.

**Media pools.** A limited number of media representatives, representing a larger number of media organizations, brought together for the purpose of covering a specific activity or operation. Pool membership is determined by the journalists involved, not military personnel. Pools are used when the media support resources cannot accommodate a large number of media representatives.

**Scrum.** A spontaneous interview of a person who is available "on the spot." When you are "scrumped," you are surrounded by journalists thrusting microphones into your face and barraging you with questions. The **ambush** is a particular form of scrum in which journalists wait out of sight for a particular person to arrive. If you are a difficult person for the media to get hold of, they will try to catch you for a scrum. The more sensational the issue, the harder they will try to get to you.

**War correspondent.** A media representative (journalist, photographer, etc.) accredited to accompany the military in areas of armed conflict. Their status is



## **PART THREE - BACKGROUND**

### **THE IMPACT/INFLUENCE OF THE MEDIA**

Media coverage can have a significant impact on military operations. We have witnessed changes in defence ministers, resignations of senior officers (including a CDS), the disbanding of the Canadian Airborne Regiment and investigations into wrong-doings in Somalia and Bakovici. These became high-profile issues because of the interest shown by the news media and the strong public reaction that was generated as a result. The media influences the military at all levels, either directly or through pressure on the government.

The power of the news media comes from their ability to select **WHAT** is reported and **HOW** it will be reported. They are able to shape the content of news stories with the inevitable result that certain "angles" or biases are introduced, sometimes at the expense of the real story. The seemingly ever-present news media are forceful persuaders with the ability to shape our perceptions and to influence our beliefs in a 5-15 second sound-bite, or with a compelling newspaper headline on a front page. They can decide for us what is news and what we need to know. This is not a phenomenon unique to Canada nor has its impact been entirely negative.

### **IMPORTANCE OF PUBLIC AFFAIRS PREPAREDNESS**

The quotation beginning the Director's Foreword suggests that the influence of the news media on the military has been recognised for well over 100 years! What has changed since Napoleon's time is the technology used to rush stories into our living rooms. High speed travel, satellite links and digital communications make it likely that our advance or reconnaissance parties will be met in-theatre by members of the news media. U.S. Marines, landing in darkness on the beaches near Mogadishu, Somalia, found themselves surrounded and illuminated by scores of journalists. More recently, the Canadian Forces' Advance Party on Operation Assurance in Central Africa, was met at the airport in Kigali, Rwanda, by members of the international news media.

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***"Public Affairs operations must be synchronized so that messages delivered are timely to events and consistent throughout the force."***

*Operation Uphold Democracy, Haiti 1994*

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To be effective, media relations must be planned for and practiced. It cannot be an after-thought or something to be addressed once in the area of operations. Unfortunately, soldiers who spend so much of their careers planning for operations and anticipating courses of action often get caught off guard by the media because they did not anticipate media interest in their operation nor were they prepared to deal with this interest. Ignoring the media will not make them go away but it guarantees that "our side" will not be heard. "We don't win unless CNN says we win," was a phrase often used during the planning stages of Operation Uphold Democracy in Haiti. It captures the realities of today's media environment.

# **PART FOUR -COMMUNICATIONS AND PUBLIC AFFAIRS POLICY**

## **THE REQUIREMENT TO PROVIDE INFORMATION**

The central theme to the government's (and by extension, the army's) communications and public affairs policy is that **there will be maximum disclosure with minimum delay**, subject to the principles of security of Canada and her allies, the provisions of Canadian privacy legislation and the proprietorship of the information. The policy will ensure that the army:

- ▶ provides information to the public about policies, programmes and services, that is accurate, objective, timely, relevant and **understandable**;
- ▶ takes into account the concerns and views of the public in establishing priorities, developing policies and implementing programmes; and
- ▶ remains visible, accessible and answerable to the public it serves.

We accept the principle that the public has a right to know and that we have a duty to inform. However, we must keep in mind that the right to information is not absolute. We must be careful as the nature of our work is often highly sensitive in terms of the potential impact on national security. **Plainly put, open government does not mean the public is entitled to classified information.**

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***"The army operated under the policy of transparency of operations and thus was able to convince the media of the appropriateness of its actions."***

*Op Salon, POR comment, 1990*

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## **GUIDING PRINCIPLES**

Policy implementation will be in accordance with the following basic principles.

- ▶ The implementation of a successful PAff programme is a command responsibility at all levels.
- ▶ The public has a right of access to all unclassified information concerning the objectives and activities of the army. Security should never be used as a reason to hide unclassified but embarrassing information.
- ▶ Army personnel must be responsible and active members of the community in which they are located.
- ▶ A successful PAff programme must be based on truth and consistency.
- ▶ PAff requires good communications.
- ▶ **Good conduct and efficient performance of their duties by all ranks is the single most important factor in creating good will between the army and the public.**

These principles are not new. They have formed the basis for the army's public affairs planning for well over 30 years! We must simply practice what we preach.

## **PART FIVE -THE NEWS MEDIA**

***"A pro-active media programme was adopted. This proved to be a key factor. Spokespersons were designated, media lines were prepared, media scrums were organized and a spokesperson was available to respond to media queries, regardless of whether the news was good or bad. The military's side was reported and the respect for, and confidence in the military continued because of this."***

*Op Salon, POR comment, 1990*

### **UNDERSTANDING YOUR MEDIA**

"WIN:WIN" results are possible in the military/news media relationship if we recall what journalists are looking for and figure out how to give it to them. We must:

- ▶ understand the nature of the news media and the relative importance of television, radio and print coverage;
- ▶ be aware of a journalist's needs;
- ▶ predict how the media will behave when covering a major event; and
- ▶ accurately judge the biases of the media and the limitations of journalists and editors.

### **TYPES OF MEDIA COVERAGE**

There are three basic types of media coverage:

- ▶ **Television.** TV is the most powerful medium as it allows us to view events from around the world, almost instantaneously while in the comfort of our own home. We watch TV primarily for its entertainment value; even news and current events programs. The impact of TV is its persuasiveness and its ability to grab an audience through the use of sight and sound and pace; the whole story must be told in a few brief images and minutes.
- ▶ **Radio.** Like TV, radio is a powerful persuader because it can reach great numbers of people, even in the most remote areas. Coverage of an event can be instantaneous, but radio is limited in the selection of available details.
- ▶ **Print.** Newspapers, magazines, etc., are not confined by time and space like the electronic media. Print media persuades through sheer weight in numbers and by providing in-depth coverage of an issue with more analysis, detail and commentary.

***"With the exception of very remote units, it is a simple fact that in disaster situations, media will always be a way ahead of the military response. They have been there waiting for us during all our overseas deployments, during OKA, during Saguenay, during the Red River flood, and they filmed the first vehicles coming inot Montreal, Ottawa and Kingston during OP RECUPERATION."***

*Public Affairs AAR, OP RECUPERATION*

## NEWS MEDIA REQUIREMENTS

For the most part, journalists are university educated and hard working. They work long hours, are very mobile and often employ the latest in communications technology. Some journalists make a lot of money, many do not. Some can be very aggressive, often doing whatever it takes to cover a story. The "Committee to protect Journalists" has estimated that over 40 journalists were killed on the job in the former Yugoslavia. Do not underestimate their determination to cover a story, in particular, your story.

Some journalists are specialists but the majority are generalists. They cover many different topics and usually work on more than one story or event each day. We cannot expect them to be knowledgeable about military issues and so we must use everyday language when providing information. More specifically, journalists need:

- ▶ **Word pictures.** Journalists look for good quotes. The best ones use colourful, descriptive words which create a mental image eg., ***"that bailey bridge is strong enough to support the weight of the CN Tower."*** Just remember, in addition to being colourful, the information must also be true, **so do your homework!**
- ▶ **Patience.** Journalists need our patience. They take complex and detailed information, given in an unfamiliar language, and boil it down into a short 3-5 min piece for TV or radio, or a couple of column inches for their publication. Be patient when providing explanations, use common



- ▶ **Trust.** Gaining the trust of the journalist(s) is time-consuming but essential if we are to succeed at communicating with the media. Always provide timely and accurate information and let the journalist decide how the story is to be written or broadcast. Don't ask to see an advance copy or suggest where emphasis could be placed etc. Such actions will imply that you don't trust the journalist. Treat everybody as a professional until they prove otherwise.
- ▶ **Angles.** Journalists hunt for lead stories. Usually the more sensational the story, the greater the media interest. This shouldn't surprise us, nor should we assume that sensational stories are negative. We can benefit by helping journalists do their jobs. Rest assured, our messages will get out to the public!
- ▶ **Other sources.** Once you have finished providing information, ask if you can be of further help. If possible, direct the journalist towards another source. Your openness will be appreciated and may pay dividends in the long run. Just ensure that you don't send the journalist on a wild goose-chase; ie. don't provide a phone number unless you know if there is going to be someone there to answer the call.

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***"The Marines never seemed to get enough media people in the field; they were still badgering the Joint Information Bureau in Dhahran for more journalists, even as the ground war kicked off. Army commanders only grudgingly accepted journalists assigned to them and, at times, could not conceal their deep-seated hostility towards the press."***

*Hotel Warriors, John J. Fialka, Operation Desert Storm, 1991*

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## **PREDICTING MEDIA BEHAVIOUR**

Media behaviour is difficult to predict UNLESS there is a crisis or emergency; then we know they will be interested in our responses and our actions. In general, the following questions may be asked:

- ▶ what happened and why;
- ▶ number of casualties, the extent of any injuries suffered and their cause(s);
- ▶ names of those killed or injured; names of any witnesses;
- ▶ value of any property stolen or destroyed and the circumstances surrounding the loss; details concerning relief efforts, including number of people and type of equipment involved; and
- ▶ what is going to be done to deal with the situation.

Although this list is by no means complete, it indicates the types of issues we may have to deal with in an emergency or crisis. There will be many more questions and there may be dozens of journalists asking them, possibly at the same time.

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***"Print and television media, despite the professionalism of journalists, may resort to sensationalism to meet the demands of their enterprise. The military has to be aware of, and responsive to, media sensationalism during a crisis. A reactive response will seldom work."***

*Op Salon, POR comment, 1990*

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## MEDIA BIASES AND LIMITATIONS

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***"Everything that we do must be honest, unbiased and unflinchingly fair. We deal with facts that are demonstrable, supported by sources that are reliable and responsible. We pursue with equal vigour all sides of a story."***

*Canadian Press Policy Manual, 1992*

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In a perfect world, media coverage of military events would be balanced and objective. All sides of an event or issue would be covered and the facts would be presented objectively so the general public could make informed opinions. Unfortunately, we do not live in a perfect world and we have to expect that, from time to time, the media will get it wrong. This situation may be avoided by ensuring that the information provided is timely, accurate and that there is **A CLEAR UNDERSTANDING BY THE NEWS MEDIA OF WHAT HAS BEEN PROVIDED TO THEM.**

## EFFECTIVE MEDIA RELATIONS

The military-news media relationship is based on mutual respect, trust and understanding. By getting to know journalists and understanding how they work (and providing them with the same opportunity), we reduce the likelihood of future misunderstandings or confrontations. **Get to know who you are dealing with;** just remember to be firm, fair and friendly and avoid making off-the-record comments, even when you are off duty.

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***"Proactive and active public affairs activities would also be valuable in theatre in counterbalancing typical belligerent misinformation and in low level 'hearts and minds' psychological operations."***

*Op Harmony, POR, Oct 94*

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## **PART SIX -** **THE MEDIA INTERVIEW**

***“Throughout the mission, the rank and file soldiers demonstrated why they are the best.”***

*Spokesperson for the Army  
Public Affairs AAR, OP RECUPERATION*

The Canadian public has a fundamental right to know about the army's operations and activities. The public gets the bulk of this information through the media and therefore it is in your best interest to speak openly with the media whenever possible.

Media interviews are always **on-the-record**, with the spokesperson providing name, rank and position/title. When background information must be provided so that the media can report a story in the proper context, prior approval must be obtained from your chain of command.

**Every soldier is a potential spokesperson about his/her own experiences and responsibilities.** Stay with what you know. Don't get sidetracked into areas outside your expertise. **Don't speculate or offer opinions on anything!** Before you answer a question, ask yourself:

Am I the right spokesperson for this issue? If not, find the right person and introduce the journalist to her/him.

Is my information correct? Don't guess, don't make it up and don't repeat rumours.

Is it proper? Some subjects are inappropriate, such as the graphic description of casualties.

Is it in line with our policy and SOPs?

### **COMMON MISCONCEPTIONS**

- the interview is a fight
- journalists are out to get us
- journalists purposely distort what you say
- journalists ask stupid questions
- journalists purposely try to "trip you up."

These situations may happen from time to time but it is not journalistic policy to behave in this way. Usually it is a case of a journalist acting in a less-than-professional manner. It is important for you to know who you are dealing with and to adjust your approach accordingly.

## INTERVIEW PREPARATION<sup>1</sup>

THE KEY TO A SUCCESSFUL INTERVIEW IS PREPARATION; even a little is better than none. Determine the following:

- ▶ **What is the subject of the interview?** Are you the right person to talk on the subject? If so, you must ensure that you know the material;
- ▶ **Who will be the interviewer?**
- ▶ **Will there be other participants and will they be interviewed at the same time or separately?** It is important to know if other people will be contacted for information on this same subject;
- ▶ **When will the interview take place?** This determines your preparation time. If you do not have enough time to prepare, ask to be interviewed at a later date;
- ▶ **Where will the interview take place?** Journalists prefer to interview soldiers in their working environment, i.e., beside an APC, tank or fuel bowser etc.;
- ▶ **How much time will the interview take?** You control the interview so tell the journalist up-front how much time you have available; and
- ▶ **When will the interview be broadcast (or printed)?** The journalist may not know this.
- ▶ Ask for a few moments to check your uniform and gather your thoughts.
- ▶ Develop your key messages in advance of the interview. These should be brief statements that make the point in an assertive manner, written on 3" by 5" index cards. Read them frequently during the early preparation phase.

<sup>1</sup>This section is based on "On the Record, a Guide to Successful Media Interviews" by Major T. Dunne

## THE INTERVIEW

- ▶ Look at the journalist when answering questions; not the camera or the microphone.
- ▶ Always remain calm. If you cannot answer a question, explain why. **It is OK to say that you do not know the answer.** Don't stomp away from a journalist as this looks bad on TV. As an alternative, politely say that you are out of time and must get back to your duties.
- ▶ Do not speculate or offer personal opinions on government policy or military operations. That is not your responsibility.
- ▶ **Speak openly with the media but do not discuss classified information, policy, rules of engagement, the appropriateness of**

- ▶ **Be honest, don't lie to journalists. Always tell the truth and you will never have trouble remembering what you said.** If you don't know the answer or you can't respond for whatever reason (e.g. classified information), tell the journalist why; don't be evasive.
- ▶ **Don't comment on hypothetical questions,** the "what if ..." Questions.
- ▶ **Be ethical;** don't play games with a journalist and don't withhold information because they didn't ask the right question(s).
- ▶ **Be polite;** if you are busy and unable to respond to a journalist, then say so and if possible, direct him/her to the PAffO or your superior.
- ▶ **Do not comment on the orders of your superiors. Your mission is to carry out these orders, not to comment on them. It would be more appropriate for the journalist to ask such questions of the superior who issued the orders.**
- ▶ Any comments you make to a journalist are on the record. **If you do not want a statement reported in the media, then don't say it!** Assume journalists are always listening and their equipment is always on. This rule applies in messes and canteens.
- ▶ **If you make a mistake and give out incorrect, classified or inappropriate information, say so and ask the journalist not to use it. Let your superior and the PAffO know as soon as possible.**
- ▶ **You have no authority to touch or seize any media equipment for whatever reason.** If a journalist records or films sensitive information you should make her/him aware and ask for cooperation but you have no legal authority to take action. Notify your superior.
- ▶ **Before answering a question, make sure you understand what is being asked. If you don't understand the question, ask that it be repeated.** Don't attempt to answer multi-barrelled questions. If they give you a two or three part question, answer the first part and then ask them to repeat the question.
- ▶ **Keep your answers short.** Only a few seconds will be used anyway so don't give long-winded explanations. Don't worry about repeating yourself as this can reinforce your message(s). Avoid military jargon; remember, you are talking to the public.
- ▶ Repeat the question when giving your answer. This makes it difficult for your answers to be taken out of context. Stay away from "No comment" and "Yes/No" answers.

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***"An armor battalion commander's guidance to his soldiers during the Gulf War suggested tanks should "button up" when any reporter approached."***

*"Editorial Comment"*  
*Newspaper Research Journal (Winter 1995)*

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- ▶ You can't censor information so don't ask to see an article before it is published.
- ▶ Most journalists are not familiar with military operations. Don't assume they know what you are talking about.
- ▶ Don't boycott the media because of an unfavourable report.
- ▶ **Every media visit is an opportunity to tell Canadians what you are doing.**
- ▶ Don't comment on the local population or belligerents since this may compromise your mission.
- ▶ **Do not comment on rumours.**
- ▶ Contact your unit PAffO if you need further advice or assistance.

Journalists do not have the final say in how their story will be printed or broadcast. They have some influence but the news piece will go through a series of edits before it is finalized.



# **PART SEVEN -** **THE MILITARY/NEWSMEDIA** **RELATIONSHIP IN OPERATIONS**

## **PUBLIC AFFAIRS PLANNING PROCESS <sup>1</sup>**

*"Prior to deployment, the SOP was revised to take into account the new media reality. The accent was placed on simplicity so that all Task Force members would clearly understand the guidelines regarding interviews with the media. This SOP was copied by other UNPROFOR units in theatre."*

Op Cavalier POR, 1995

Effective military/news media relations do not happen by chance. Public affairs plans must be developed for each operation or exercise and included as an annex to the op plan. In this regard, the unit/formation PAffO is an integral member of the ops planning team. For a sample public affairs annex, see Annex A to this section.

The public affairs plan will address specific points in each of the five phases of an operation.

### **Phase 1 - Warning**

**The public affairs plan must be initiated by the commander.** However, the commander's plan will not be followed unless it is known. A lack of direction in this regard is equivalent to planning for poor public relations.

Plan for early deployment and late redeployment of PAff personnel and assets.

Establish media centres at home bases.

Ensure that unit and formation SOPs on public affairs provide the necessary guidance.

**Inform your soldiers once your plan is formulated. The best way to prepare your soldiers for media encounters is to tell them what is going on and why.**

<sup>1</sup> Some material in this section has been taken from the U.S. Army Centre for Army Lessons Learned (CALL) Newsletter "In the Spotlight", 92-7.

## **Phase 2 - Mounting**

Soldiers must receive the necessary training in order to deal effectively with journalists.

***"Media relations training is essential because it exposes soldiers to proven interview techniques so they will not be intimidated once the TV camera's red light goes on."***

*Operation Uphold Democracy, Haiti, 1994*

Implement PAff plans during training for deployments.

Allow media access during training for deployments.

## **Phase 3 - Deployment**

Invite local media to cover the departure of lead elements from their home base(s).

## **Phase 4 - Employment**

Front line units will become the focus of news reporting during military operations. Information that could compromise the operation(s) if disclosed publicly via the news media must be protected so it is essential that soldiers be briefed on what they can and cannot talk about.

Commanders must also ensure that they do not create the public perception of an attempt by the military to "control" the news media. Here are some helpful hints:

- ▶ TELL your soldiers that the news media will show up in your area, and train your soldiers how to handle unaccredited media.
- ▶ LET your soldiers talk to the media when practicable. Ensure they are briefed in advance on those subjects to be avoided.

**PROVIDE accredited media with transportation if possible. It will pay off in the coverage of your people and their accomplishments.**

MAINTAIN a professional attitude during interviews, even when the media seems aggressive.

- ▶ DEVELOP plans outlining the extent of logistical support to be provided the news media.
- ▶ ENSURE balanced coverage of units in your formation. Don't send the media to the same unit all the time, and don't forget attached units.
- ▶ DON'T stage events or activities for the media. They should be passive

**The challenge of providing the public and the news media with information is a 24/7 business.** One of the common complaints against the army is the difficulty in getting answers to questions, particularly about newsworthy events such as accidents. Two points must be observed in handling requests for information:

- ▶ The media generally require information in a hurry. They prefer to get it from official sources **IF** they know it will be accurate and in sufficient detail. If they can't get it this way, they will go to unofficial sources; and
- ▶ News dies quickly. If the information provided is complete, accurate and timely, the news media may feature the story for only a short period of time. If they have to dig for the information, rest assured it will be featured as an on-going story and may drag on for days.

**Information provided by the deployed unit must be presented in a "positive" manner.** A plan must exist whereby information requests are anticipated, responses prepared and spokespersons identified in advance; this is especially important when dealing with emergencies. The "positive" nature of the information will be reflected by its accuracy and the speed of its delivery. This is the only way that we can effectively convey our message(s) to the media and perhaps influence the type of coverage.

**As an organization, the army and therefore a unit cannot be understood and supported by the public if nothing is known about its members and their activities.** Ignorance builds distrust and suspicion and in such an atmosphere it is easy for rumours and misinformation to grow. Specific measures must be taken to ensure that we do not isolate ourselves from the news media and the general public.

The commander becomes the lightning rod for everything that happens. **The commander must be prepared to meet the media on a frequent but controlled basis.**

### **Phase 5 - Redeployment**

Soldiers cannot do their best if they believe their efforts have gone unnoticed and unappreciated. In developing a public affairs plan which deals with this issue, we must take into account our internal audience as well. It is important that all members of the team (ie. the navy and the air force), as well as our families, be made aware of the army's many contributions towards peace and security. Media coverage of the return home of the troops must be coordinated in order to maximize their exposure and highlight their

## CRISIS COMMUNICATIONS <sup>1</sup>

During times of crises it is best to follow an established procedure. The following steps should be included.

- ▶ Get the facts. Determine the situation and assess the public affairs implications. Establish what information is approved for public release.
- ▶ Check SOPs. Do not re-invent the wheel.
- ▶ Maintain regular communications with public affairs and command staff. You must know what is going on!
- ▶ Get relevant, accurate information to the public as soon as practicable. Bad news is best told sooner rather than later. Once clearance has been received to make public statements, you should do so quickly and thoroughly.
- ▶ Be accessible. The media will be interested in our reactions and comments, even if developments are slow.
- ▶ Be thorough. Strive to pass the same information to all media agencies. Maintain a log of media contacts.
- ▶ Be considerate. Do not violate privacy regulations, especially with regards to casualty information.
- ▶ Be professional. Maintain a cool, balanced approach. Don't become drawn into activities not directly related to the crisis.
- ▶ Be honest.



<sup>1</sup> This section taken from “The Emergency Public Relations Manual:, 3rd

## **"SAMPLE" PUBLIC AFFAIRS ANNEX TO OP PLAN**

Each operations order will have a public affairs annex to include the following essential information:

### **SITUATION**

- a. **General.** Provide a brief description of the general situation to include: current en dispositions and intentions; fr force dispositions and intentions; world opinion WRT the fighting, etc.; number of international news media reps (NMRs) in-theatre, their locations and their affiliations.
- b. **Enemy.** Outline how the en may try to exploit the media for its own purposes.
- c. **Friendly.** Describe the fr force PAff assets in-theatre to include; their locations, functions, relationship to you in the chain of command. Also include the attitude of the host nation (ie. where the fighting is taking place) towards media coverage on its territory.

### **MISSION**

State what the PAff mission is for your unit or formation, eg. *2 Bde will conduct PAff operations in support of.... by ensuring a continuous flow of timely, accurate information..... consistent with operational security.*

### **EXECUTION**

- a. **General.** Describe what the PAff approach will be, that is, active or re-active. How will the coverage of your unit/formation's activities be facilitated and by whom? How will you measure the success of your PAff operation?
- b. **Concept of Operations.** Provide direction as to what level of media support is to be expected from the unit or formation, eg. *1 Div policy requires units to assist all accredited media on a non-interference basis...*

### c. **Target Audiences**

- (1) Internal (define).
- (2) External (define).
- (3) .....

d. **Messages.** One, or a number of brief, bullet-form statements which will be included in your PAff activities and communications, eg.

- *the goal of 1 Div is to ....*
- *the soldiers of 1 Div and its allies have the will, resolve, capability and technological superiority to ....*

e. **PA activities.** A description of those activities which will be coordinated by the PAffO in support of the commander. To include but not limited to the following:

- (1) Media briefing area(s).
- (2) Media kits.
- (3) Media escort policy.
- (4) News media representative processing.
- (5) Etc.

### f. **Coordinating instructions**

(1) **Reports and returns.** Direction provided to subordinate units/formations WRT media-related information required.

(2) **Operational security.** Policy WRT dealing with the media.

(3) **Assistance to media policy.** Direction as to what level of support to media is authorized.

(4) **Media accreditation policy.** Policy WRT media accreditation, who does it and where. Outline of the policy in dealing with non-accredited media.

(5) **Information release policy.** Identify who is the primary releasing authority for information, who else has it been delegated to and the coordination responsibilities of the

## SERVICE SUPPORT

a. **Transport.** Are accredited media able to travel on unit vehicles? If so, what are the restrictions? Outline the policy WRT non-accredited media.

b. **Misc support.**

(1) **Meals.** Who do we feed and how do they pay?

(2) **Medical.** What level of med support are we authorized to provide?

(3) **Personnel.** Outline policy dealing with media casualties.

## COMMAND AND SIGNALS



## **PART EIGHT - PUBLIC AFFAIRS REFERENCES**

QR&O 4.13	INFORMATION PROGRAMS AND COMMUNITY RELATIONS
QR&O 4.27	PROVISION FOR INFORMATION PROGRAMMES AND PROMOTION OF COMMUNITY RELATIONS
QR&O 19.36	DISCLOSURE OF INFORMATION OR OPINION
QR&O 19.37	PERMISSION TO COMMUNICATE INFORMATION
QR&O 19.375	COMMUNICATION TO NEWS AGENCIES
QR&O 19.38	COMMUNICATIONS WITH OTHER GOVERNMENT DEPARTMENTS
QR&O 24.02	PRESS RELEASES REGARDING CASUALTIES
QR&O 112.10	WHO MAY BE PRESENT AT COURTS MARTIAL
DAOD 1002-2	ACCESS TO INFORMAL INFORMATION
DAOD 2008-0	PUBLIC AFFAIRS POLICY
DAOD 2008-5	PUBLIC AFFAIRS PLANNING AND PROGRAM DELIVERY
CFAO 20-26	SVC FLIGHTS - TRANSPORTATION OF PERSONNEL ON ATG ROUTE, TRAINER, SPECIAL AND TRAINING FLIGHTS
CFAO 24-1	CASUALTIES - REPORTING AND ADMINISTRATION
CFAO 28-1	PROVISION OF QUARTERS AND RATIONS
CFAO 47-5	PRIVATE MESSAGES
CFAO 53	PHOTOGRAPHY (COMPLETE SERIES)
CFAO 57-5	UNOFFICIAL SERVICE NEWSPAPERS
CFAO 57-12	PUBLICATION MANAGEMENT POLICY
CFAO 61-10	VISITS TO DND AND CF BY FOREIGN NATIONALS

## **DOCUMENTATION AND REFERENCES**

This edition of *Dispatches* was a collaborative effort between Maj JR Babiuk, 1 Canadian Division PAffO, who was the principle author, and the staff

**ARMY LESSONS LEARNED CENTRE  
PO BOX 17000 STN FORCES, KINGSTON, ON K7K 7B4  
LE CENTRE DES LEÇONS RETENUES DE L'ARMÉE  
CP 17000 SUCC FORCES, KINGSTON, ON K7K 7B4  
(613)541-5010 / CSN(RCCC) 270-5010**

**LCol JM Petryk - *Director / Directeur*  
(Ext/Poste 4814) - dir@allc.com**

**Maj FM Aubin - *SO Operations / OEM Opérations*  
(Ext/Poste 4816) - soops@allc.com**

**Maj R Kennedy - *SO Training / OEM Entraînement*  
(Ext/Poste 5117) - sotrg@allc.com**

**Capt RE Kingsbury - *SO / OEM Production*  
(Ext/Poste 4813) - soprod@allc.com**

**Capt R Paquin- *SO / OEM Administration*  
(Ext/Poste 5119) - soadmin@allc.com**

**MCpl/CplC Simonneau-Guay S - *Clerk/Commis*  
(Ext/Poste 8100) - clerk@allc.com**

**FAX/Télécopieur: (613)541-4815/CSN(RCCC) 270-4815  
INTERNET - www.allc.com E-Mail(Courriel): allc@allc.com  
DIN(RDI) - http://kingston.dwan.dnd.ca/allc/  
DEMS E-Mail (Courriel SCED) - dispatches@ALLC**