LAMPREYS UNDER A SHARK

Embedded news reporters and the military in the 21st century

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Abstract

The most prominent development in media-military relations during the 2003 American-led invasion of Iraq was the creation of the embedding system. The Canadian military used a similar embedding system to grant reporters access to its mission in Afghanistan. And while embedding is not new in concept or in name, the scale and organized use of the system is. By placing the embedding system in historical context, this thesis will argue it is an improvement on other media-military systems. But, this should not mask the important fact that the Pentagon used the embedding system as a pretext to block other types of reporting. In contrast, the Canadian embedding system was more permissive towards journalists. Rather than reflecting an ideological difference between militaries, the different systems were due to circumstantial differences in mission. Ultimately, the journalistic value of embedding depends upon the nature of the mission in which it is used.

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Introduction

Public sentiment is everything. With public sentiment nothing can fail; without it, nothing can succeed. Consequently, he who molds public sentiment goes deeper than he who enacts statutes or pronounces decisions. He makes statutes or decisions possible or impossible to be executed.

-Abraham Lincoln[i]

The first essential in military operations is that no information of value shall be given to the enemy. The first essential in newspaper work and broadcasting is wide-open publicity. It is your job and mine to reconcile those sometimes diverse considerations.

-Dwight D. Eisenhower[ii]

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[i] In debate with Stephen Douglas, 21 August, 1858. Cited in Ray Eldon Hiebert, *Courtier to the Crowd: The Story of Ivy Lee and the Development of Public Relations*. (Iowa: Iowa State University Press, 1966).

[ii] Cited in: Office of the Secretary of Defense. "Conduct of the Persian Gulf War." *Final Report to Congress*, April 1992, p. 651. (http://www.ndu.edu/library/epubs/cpgw.pdf)

Two weeks before the first United States' (US) cruise missiles struck targets in Baghdad, Iraq, marking the beginning of the second US-led invasion of that country, the fax machine in the office of Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld started buzzing. A short letter, authored by Joel Simon, acting director of the Committee to Protect Journalists, popped out onto the printing tray. Dated 6 March, 2003, the letter began: "Dear Secretary Rumsfeld, The Committee to Protect Journalists is encouraged that the administration is making efforts to accommodate journalists who are seeking to cover a possible US military action in the Gulf."[iii]

Officially, US military action was indeed still a possibility. The probability that American forces would turn back after many months of build-up was, however, very slim. United States President George W. Bush had made this quite clear during a national press conference on that same day: "The risk of doing nothing, the risk of hoping that Saddam Hussein changes his mind and becomes a gentle soul, the risk that somehow -- that inaction will make the world safer, is a risk I'm not willing to take for the American people."[iv]

Simon's letter continued: "We welcome the Pentagon's plan to *embed* as many as 500 journalists with US forces as a positive step that will improve front-line access to combat operations." After numerous pre-war meetings between top communications strategists at the Pentagon, such as Assistant Secretary of Defense for Public Affairs (ASD-PA)

[iii] Joel Simon, "CPJ sends letter to Secretary Rumsfeld." *Committee to Protect Journalists*, 6 March 2003. (http://www.cpj.org/protests/03ltrs/USA06march03pl.html)
[iv] George W. Bush, "President George Bush Discusses Iraq in National Press Conference." *The White House, Office of the Press Secretary*, 6 March 2003. (http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2003/03/20030306-8.html)

Victoria Clarke and her deputy Bryan Whitman, and the bureau chiefs of major American news organizations in Washington, the term embedding was on the tip of many tongues. Whitman later described journalistic embedding as thus: "Embedding means living, eating, moving in combat with the unit you're attached to."[v] Alternatively, embedding is a system for organizing the media-military relationship in which reporters travel with military units, see what the solders see, and report from the front lines.

Despite Simon's modestly enthusiastic endorsement of embedding in the courteous opening paragraph of his letter to Secretary Rumsfeld, he quickly changed tone: "Perhaps more important than the embed plan itself is the extent to which journalists not embedded with US troops will be allowed to move and gather news freely. To date, US officials have offered no convincing guarantees that "unilateral" reporting, or reports by nonembedded journalists, will be allowed to proceed without interference." In two simple lines Simon cut to the heart of the problem with the Pentagon's media policy for the Iraq War. Embedding, while garnering the lion's share of attention in post-war literature and analysis, was really a diversion from a more important point: restricted unilateral reporting was the quid pro quo for embedding.

Today, ASD-PA Clarke is widely cited as one of the chief architects of the Pentagon's embedding policy for Iraq. But the former manager at Hill & Knowlton, a global public

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[v] Cited in Christopher Paul and James J. Kim, *Reporters on the Battlefield: The Embedded Press System in Historical Context.* (Santa Monica: Rand Corporation, 2004.) 67.

relations and marketing firm, was by no means the inventor of the concept behind embedding. Reporters have been traveling with soldiers to varying degrees since the advent of the modern war correspondent during the Crimean War in 1854. What Clarke does deserve credit for is organizing the largest embedding program to date and selling it to a skeptical Department of Defense in Washington.

To understand embedding, it is necessary to examine the historical relationship between the news media and the military. As a method for organizing that relationship, embedding was built on the foundation of methods that preceded it. For example, during the British invasion of the Falkland Islands in 1982, the Ministry of Defence denied reporters access to the battlefield. The American military regarded this as good public affairs practice and applied a similar technique during the invasion of Grenada in 1983. Totally denying reporters access to military operations was clearly unsustainable. Reporters grumbled long and loud until the Pentagon appointed a retired major-general, Winant Sidle, to head a commission into the shortcomings of the relationship between the American news media and the military. Sidle's findings would ultimately lead to the creation of the press pool system, a system deployed most notably during the invasion of Panama in 1989, then again during the first Gulf War in 1991. The pool system eventually collapsed during the early stages of the invasion of Afghanistan in the 21st century, at which time embedding emerged to fill the void. Chapter One of this thesis will examine the historical bedrock on which embedding rests. Starting at the Crimean War, the major conflicts that helped define the media-military relationship in western countries will be identified and their importance to this discussion examined. Not every

conflict that falls between the Crimean War and the invasion of Iraq in 2003 will be examined. Rather, only those most important wars that helped shape media-military policy and left a legacy for the next generation of soldiers and reporters will be studied.

Chapter Two will summarize some of the key works of literature, and key theories, on the relationship between news reporters and their sources. For the context of this discussion, the terms "journalist" and "reporter" will be used interchangeably, and both refer to those who gather and disseminate information in the form of print or broadcast news. While reporters can and do draw on many sources of information, for the context of this discussion, "source" will refer only to the human sources that appear in reporters' stories.

Much of the academic literature on this topic published before the early 1990's focused on the power wielded by reporters to call on sources and shape the news. But in the last fifteen years, scholars have turned their attention to the power of sources to access news organizations and fashion a public message. Of particular importance to a discussion of embedding is the theory of absorption: sources can gradually absorb reporters into the source culture to influence news coverage in a favorable way. Absorption is a theory most commonly examined in the context of beat reporting, and this chapter will examine absorption in the context of embedding.

The fine details of the embedding arrangement between reporters and the Pentagon in the 2003 Iraq War will be examined in Chapter Three. This chapter will be limited to discussing embedding during the first, formal phase of combat in Iraq, that is from 20

March, 2003 to 1 May, 2003. The history of the American embedding program, started during the administration of President Bill Clinton, carrying through to the 2001 invasion of Afghanistan and 2003 invasion of Iraq, will be detailed. A body of primary and secondary evidence will then be presented detailing exactly what did and did not work for journalists embedded with American military units. Ultimately, this chapter will argue that embedding is an improvement over other systems for organizing the media-military relationship, such as "denial of access" and "press pools." However, despite the fact some embedded reporters had a positive experience in Iraq, the vast majority did not. Most reporters who were embedded never heard a gunshot, never saw a firefight, and never reported a combat story. For reporters who were not embedded, the situation was even worse. The embedding program was, as Joel Simon predicted in his letter to Secretary Rumsfeld, used as a pretext to block out unilateral reporters. Collectively, western news coverage of the invasion of Iraq lacked multiple perspectives and in many cases, context.

Finally, Chapter Four will present the Canadian Forces (CF) embedding program and argue it was a superior system for journalists, compared to the American embedding system. Rather than reflecting any ideological difference towards reporters on the part of the military, the superiority of the CF embedding program was due to a difference in mission. Starting in August 2003, the CF embedded reporters as part of their stabilization and reconstruction mission to Afghanistan. The CF gave reporters long-term access to their soldiers and their base on the outskirts of the Afghan capital Kabul, called Camp Julien. Being essentially static, that is based at Camp Julien and for the most part

conducting short day patrols around the city, totally changed the embedding experience. During the invasion of Iraq, the US military was constantly moving forward and progressing towards Baghdad. But in Afghanistan, the CF played a peace-support role with significantly less movement and heavy combat. This afforded the military more leeway to ease restrictions on embedded journalists and to accommodate, rather than block, unilateral reporters. Being static also presented more opportunities for the CF to press information on embedded journalists and influence coverage of their mission.

This thesis will draw on a variety of primary and secondary sources. There exists a vast body of academic literature on the history of media-military relations. Most of this literature, in the English language, focuses on the experiences of American and British reporters and soldiers, and to a lesser extent the Canadian and Australian experiences. The first and second chapters of this thesis will draw on many of the more substantial secondary sources in the fields of media-military history and media sociology. Because embedding, as practiced by the American and Canadian militaries in Iraq and Afghanistan, is a relatively new phenomenon, fewer secondary sources exist to inform the second half of this thesis. What secondary sources do exist, in the form of journal articles and scholarly books, will be drawn upon in the third chapter and supplemented with primary research. There is very little secondary material documenting the CF embedding program in Afghanistan. Because of this, the fourth chapter draws almost entirely on primary research, in the form of personal interviews, print and broadcast news stories, information obtained through the *Access to Information Act*, and other government

documents. Substantial holes exist in the study of media-military relations in Canada, and this thesis seeks to fill one such hole.

Chapter One

History

In 1944, Dwight D. Eisenhower remarked on the very different information objectives of the news media and the military. The military, he said, is concerned with secrecy. The news media, on the other hand, is concerned with publicity: "It is your job and mine to reconcile those sometimes diverse considerations."[i] This was true during the Crimean War, as it was during the Second World War, as it is in Iraq and Afghanistan today. News media on the battlefield want to capture the conflict and relate the experience to their audiences as widely and accurately as possible. The military wants to achieve operational success and help fulfill the political goals motivating war. On the surface these objectives should be able to run concurrently. However, the proliferation of accurate and timely information can jeopardize military success. Live or near-live broadcasting is especially challenging for the military because it can undercut the opportunity for security reviews or censorship. What if warring generals could sit in their respective command headquarters and monitor enemy actions, in real time, via *CNN* and *Al-Jazeera*?

Journalistic embedding, the act of placing reporters in active military units to live and report from the front, is an attempt to redress the competing interests of the media and the military that Eisenhower made reference to in 1944. Embedding, as practiced by the United States military in the 2003 invasion of Iraq and by the Canadian military as of August, 2003 in Afghanistan, is not an idea that was suddenly dreamt up by Pentagon communications strategists. Rather, it is the product of over 150 years of experimentation and lessons by both the media and the military.

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[i] Cited in: Office of the Secretary of Defense, "Conduct of the Persian Gulf War." *Final Report to Congress*, April 1992, p. 651. (http://www.ndu.edu/library/epubs/cpgw.pdf)

When examining the history of battlefield journalism by studying the most major and modern conflicts, a cyclical relationship emerges. Most academic literature pegs the Crimean War of 1854 as the starting point for an examination of media-military relations. This was the first conflict that was covered by professional, battlefield journalists. World War One (WWI) and World War II (WWII) were both heavily covered by the international press corps. Some reporters embedded themselves with Allied forces, and some ventured onto the battlefield independently. But the dynamics of media-military relations were different during the World Wars than at any previous time as these conflicts were "Total Wars" and notions of journalistic objectivity largely fell to the wayside.

After WWII, the media-military relationship changed. The Vietnam War, in particular, was reported in a radically different way than anything prior. From 1965 on, journalists were given virtual freedom of movement and nothing was censored.[ii] Images of dead civilians and massacred GI's were beamed across America via the blossoming medium of television. Conservatives in the American government and military largely blamed reporters for souring public opinion, forcing a premature pull-out and ultimately, losing the war. Irrespective of the truth, military policy makers felt stung after Vietnam and adjusted the media-military relationship accordingly.

[ii] Phillip Knightley, *The First Casualty: The War Correspondent as Hero and Myth-Maker From the Crimea to Kosovo.* (London: The John Hopkins University Press, 2000.) 465.

Access to the US invasions of Grenada (1983) and Panama (1989) were strictly controlled, to the point of media exclusion, as was the British conflict with Argentina over the Falkland Islands (1982). Slightly less exclusionary tactics were devised in 1990's, such as the pool system employed during the 1991 American-led campaign against Iraq. In 2003, embedding became the primary system for organizing the media-military relationship during the American-led invasion of Iraq, and Canadian Forces participation in Afghanistan.

To understand why the American and Canadian militaries used embedding, and to fairly evaluate its usefulness to the media, military and public, it is necessary to contextualize via a detailed examination of history. A vast body of English-language academic literature exists in the study of media-military relations. It focuses primarily on the American and British experiences as these are the countries that appear to have the most developed, critical, and self reflective media-military relationships. An emerging theme is that the news media are rarely idle bystanders when it comes to devising and applying the ground rules of battlefield reporting. The restrictive circumstances war reporters sometimes find themselves in are often the result of safety considerations, military strategizing, and news media collusion with military public affairs planning.

Standing on the Shoulders of Giants - Crimean War: 1854 - 1856

Arthur Wellesley and his allies defeated Napoleon Bonaparte at the Battle of Waterloo on 18 June, 1815. Since his rise to power in a 1799 coup, Bonaparte had sought the

creation of an empire for France, an empire that included Britain. In 1803 the British declared war on France and for the next 11 years the Napoleonic Wars were waged. A successful allied invasion forced Bonaparte's abdication in 1814 with the Treaty of Fontainebleau. Bonaparte escaped from exile on the Island of Elba in March 1815, meaning the final chapter had yet to be written. He entered Paris three weeks later and coalition forces again declared war. What then became know as the Battle of Waterloo was not actually fought in Waterloo. Bonaparte's men fell at La Belle Alliance, France. But, history is written by the victors and the Duke of Wellington, Arthur Wellesley, insisted the battle take the name of the place in which he had spent the night prior.[iii] So the history books closed on the Battle of Waterloo.

Nearly one hundred years later Britain would again send its sons to fight a European war. This time France was an ally in the world's first global war. Archduke Franz Ferdinand, heir to the Austro-Hungarian Hapsburg throne, was assassinated by a Bosnian Serb named Gavrilo Princip on 28 June, 1914. The Hapsburg response was to slaughter hundreds of Orthodox Serb peasants and declare war on Serbia. Germany issued a "blank cheque" offer of unconditional support to the Austrians. But any aggression directed at Serbia inevitably would anger Russia and her Entente partners, France and Britain. The shot that killed Archduke Ferdinand tripped a series of alliances that ignited WWI and ravaged Europe for the next five years.

[iii] BBC, "The Battle of Waterloo." *BBC History*. (http://www. bbc.co.uk/history/war/waterloo/waterloo.shtml)

Between the end of the Napoleonic Wars and the beginning of WWI, Britain would only become seriously involved in one other European conflict: the Crimean War. In 1853 a quarrel between Orthodox Russia and Catholic France erupted over who would dominate the holy places in Jerusalem and Nazareth. Russia sent troops to defend the Orthodox Christians within the Ottoman Empire. The Turks declared war and on 28 March, 1854 Britain and France did the same to prevent Russian expansion. Within months allied troops invaded the Crimea and laid siege to the Russian-held city of Sebastopol. Despite thousands of British and French deaths, due primarily to disease, the allied invaders would win the war and conclude peace in Paris in 1856.[iv]

During that two year period, British news consumers were getting a radically different style of war coverage than they had in the past. *The Times* of London, in February 1854, sent William Howard Russell to accompany a contingent of British troops to Malta. Russell's deployment represented a drastic break with previous styles of war reporting:

> Before Crimea, British editors either stole war news from foreign newspapers or employed junior officers to send letters from the battlefront, a most unsatisfactory arrangement. For not only were these soldier-correspondents highly selective in what they wrote, regarding themselves first as soldiers and then as correspondents; they also understood little of the workings of newspapers or even of what constituted news.[v]

[iv] BBC, "Victorians: The Crimean War." *BBC History.* (http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/timelines/britain/vic_crimean_war.shtml)
[v] Phillip Knightley, *The First Casualty*, 2.

Phillip Knightley's work, The First Casualty: The War Correspondent as Hero and Myth-Maker, From the Crimea to Kosovo pegs the Crimean War as the starting point for his examination of battlefield journalism because it was the first war in which professional journalists covered combat operations. Knightley's work is clearly a benchmark in this field of academic literature and is widely cited in subsequent works.* John Hohenberg's Foreign Correspondence, The Great Reporters and Their Times is another benchmark work, as is Joseph J. Mathews' Reporting the Wars, and Robert W. Desmond's three-volume examination of 20th century war reporting, Windows on the World, 1900 – 1920, Crisis and Conflict 1920-1940, and Tides of War, 1940 1945.

Examining the history of Russell and *The Times* illuminates one the earliest example of the power of the press in battle. The British military was rusty as it ventured into the Crimea. Having not fought for almost forty years they were ill equipped, and ill led. Lord Raglan led the British expedition despite having never commanded in the field. To make matters worse, his underlings, what Knightley calls the "worst collection of subordinate officers ever concentrated in one army" brought their chefs, servants, women and wine.[vi] Russell, and the other correspondents, recognized and reported these facts.

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* For example, Mark Connelly and David Welch, *War and the Media: Reportage and Propaganda, 1900 – 2003*. (London: St. Martins Press, 2005.), Derrik Mercer, Geoff Mungham and Kevin Williams, *The Fog of War: Media on the Battlefield.* (London: Heinemann, 1987), Philip M. Taylor, *War and the Media.* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1992), Peter Young and Peter Jesser, *The Media and the Military: From the Crimea to Desert Strike.* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1997.)

[vi] Knightly, *The First Casualty*, 5.

Another problem correspondents focused on was the unbearable strain under which the medical services were operated. A lack of surgeons and supplies meant vastly more men died in hospitals than on the battlefield, something common in this era. Public outrage grew over the dismal conditions in which soldiers were living and dying. Russell described the situation as such:

> The dead laid out as they died, were laying side by side with the living and the latter presented a spectacle beyond all imagination...there was not the least attention paid to decency or cleanliness – the stench was appalling.[vii]

The furor grew to such a point that the Aberdeen government collapsed in 1855.[viii] Through editorials and Russell's reports, *The Times* took a clear stance first against the government, and then against Lord Raglan and the military command. The power of the press had been demonstrated. The new Secretary of War, the Duke of Newcastle, later told Russell, "It was you who turned out the government."[ix]

It is not easy to characterize Russell's reporting in modern terms. He, and other correspondents, spent time attached to various British military units, but this was on their own initiative and they were never welcome. Russell went so far as to buy a horse and a uniform in order to accompany the troops to battle, but "Lord Raglan decided not to recognize the correspondents, not to give them rations or assistance, and to look the other way at any efforts by junior officers to discourage them."[x] As the first attempt at

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[vii] Cited in: Young, *The Media and the Military*, 23.
[viii] Young, *The Media and the Military*. 23.
[ix] Knightley, *The First Casualty*, 13.
[x] Knightley, *The First Casualty*, 15.

modern combat reporting, it is not surprising the media-military relationship was ambiguous and difficult to characterize. What is most important about the Crimean War is that is was the first conflict to be covered by professional journalists.

Journalism and Total War - World War One: 1914 - 1918

The First World War was one of the largest exercises of organized butchery in the history of mankind. Over eight million men from a multitude of nations died as war ravaged Europe for five years. Societies were restructured to channel all human and natural resources towards sustaining the war. Young men were conscripted. Women were drafted into factory work. Food rationing became a fact of life. Channeling every available resource towards defeating an enemy and destroying their capacity to fight is called Total War. And under the umbrella of Total War in 1914, journalism was not exempt: "To enable the war to go on, 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."[xi]

Knightley characterizes the period between 1914-1918 as that in which more lies were told by politicians, military men, and journalists than any other in history. Some writers, in fact, take this idea a step further and say there was simply no appetite for negative news. In The Media and the Military: From The Crimea to Desert Strike, Peter Young and Peter Jesser argue the press could not possibly have reported the truth

[xi] Knightley, *The First Casualty*, 84.

because the public wanted nothing but "...patriotic optimism. Whether...the media could have gone against the trend and survived is debatable."[xii]

Writers like Knightley, Hohenberg, and Young and Jesser, present plans to control the press in times of national emergency as a Machiavellian tactic that had been in the works since 1904. As a lesson learned from the Russo-Japanese war, the British Minister for War, Arnold Foster, drew up a memorandum that developed into a planning document entitled 'Control of the Press in Time of War or Threat.'[xiii] The ideas instilled in this document, essentially censorship and press restrictions, would appear at the outbreak of WWI when the British War Press Bureau was formed to control wartime information.

To complicate journalists' lives, the British Army was led by Lord Kitchener, a man notorious for his hatred of the press. A veteran commander of the Boer War, Kitchener had been ennobled for his efforts in capturing the Sudanese city of Khartoum in 1898. "Out of my way, you drunken swabs!" he famously snapped at British journalists in Sudan.[xiv] Sixteen years later none of that contempt had abated and Kitchener immediately issued an order removing all media from the battlefield. Journalists who remained were to be arrested and have their passports confiscated, a policy also used by the French.

[xii] Young, *The Media and the Military,* 35.
[xiii] Young, *The Media and the Military*, 31.
[xiv] Knightley, *The First Casualty*, 89.

The government then appointed a military officer, Colonel Ernest Swinton, to write eyewitness accounts to be disseminated to the press. All items were vetted by high ranking officers, including the Chief of Intelligence and by some accounts, Kitchener himself.[xv] Swinton's "reports" amounted to little more than propaganda and satisfied neither the press nor the public. The Newspaper Proprietors Association (NPA) began to apply pressure and after months of haggling the government caved and granted access to select campaigns.[xvi]

Soon after easing access restrictions, it became apparent that the British government had nothing to fear from battlefield correspondents. The poor planning and mismanagement that sometimes characterized the British effort in WWI went virtually unreported by the press. Correspondents willingly acquiesced in the government's aim to produce stories of heroism and glory designed to bolster patriotic enthusiasm, swell the ranks of conscripts, and cover the frequent blunders of the high command.[xvii]

A valuable primary resource in examining this era of media-military relations are individual reporters' post-war memoirs. They make it clear that the war effort was so all-encompassing that journalists overwhelming felt it was their patriotic duty to spin the news in order keep morale high and the war machine rolling. In Adventures in Journalism, *The Times* correspondent Philip Gibbs wrote:

[xv] Young, *The Media and the Military*, 32.
[xvi] Young, *The Media and the Military*, 33.
[xvii] Knightley, *The First Casualty*, 103.

> We identified ourselves absolutely with the armies in the field...we wiped out of our minds all thought of personal scoops and all temptation to write one word which would make the task of officers and men more difficult and dangerous. There was no need of censorship of our dispatches. We were our own censors.[xviii]

An American correspondent for *United Press,* Wilbur Forrest, wrote a similar account of First World War correspondence:

> A heavy defeat was often described as a strategic withdrawal, or even more boldly, the occupation of a new position in accordance with a plan. Communiqués minimized defeat and exaggerated victory. They did so rightly, because in a struggle of world magnitude it was a vital function of the communiqué writers to keep the people at home in an optimistic frame of mind... The critical correspondent was outflanked, decimated, routed.[xix]

After 1915, when their presence became permitted on the battlefield, reporters were supplied by the Allies with uniforms, transportation, headquarters near the front, and the obligatory censors. In an essay published in 2004, Knightley identifies WWI as the first time embedding was used. He states the American embedding system of 2003, "...was copied from the British system in the First World War, when six correspondents embedded with the army on the Western Front produced the worst reporting of just about any war and were all knighted for their services."[xx]

[xviii] Philip Gibbs, *Adventures in Journalism.* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1923.) 231.
[xix] Cited in: John Hohenberg, *Foreign Correspondence: The Great Reporters and Their Times.* (New York: Syracuse University Press, 1995.) 93.
[xx] Phillip Knightley, "History or Bunkum" in *Tell Me Lies: Propaganda and Media Distortion in the Attack on Iraq.* Ed. David Miller. (London: Pluto Press, 2004) 101.

An early pool system was also tried out in WWI where correspondents drew straws on the day of an attack and the winners went to battle. They recorded the details of the bombardment and interviewed whomever they could. Back at headquarters they pooled their stories and filed reports to their respective news agencies.[xxi]

The news media's performance in Britain was typical of Allied nations. Some, like Australian reporter and war historian Charles Bean, did get beyond the censorship and spin to report the realities of, for example, the Gallipoli campaign.[xxii] But nevertheless, most failed to get beyond modest criticism of the conduct of war and news consumers were generally left with an impression of overwhelming military success.

Journalism and Total War - World War Two: 1939 – 1945

The Great War ended on 11 November, 1918. Germany was forced to sign the Treaty of Versailles on 28 June, 1919. The terms of the treaty stated Germany's army would be reduced and its air force abolished. Germany was also to pay massive reparation payments and had to accept the War Guilt Clause, admitting absolute responsibility for starting the war. But after the terms became public, German anger and indignation grew. The treaty was labeled a *Diktat*, unfairly imposed on the country by the victorious Allies.

[xxi] Knightley, *The First Casualty*, 102.
[xxii] Knightley, *The First Casualty*, 117.

Over the interwar period, discontent continued to simmer and grow. The German economy was devastated under the Weimar Republic and inflation reduced the Deutsche-mark to one-trillionth of its pre-war value in September, 1923. Conditions were ripe for Adolf Hitler's aggressive, nationalistic message. Hitler openly flouted the terms of the treaty by re-militarizing the Rhineland, expanding the army and navy, and rebuilding the German air force. Germany invaded Czechoslovakia without repercussions in March 1939, but after invading Poland in September, Britain and France declared war and the Second World War began.

The literature on WWII reporting indicates journalists again wrapped their reports in nationalistic spin to keep morale high.[xxiii] The lamenting *Baltimore Sun* journalist, Henry L. Mencken, sounds remarkably similar to Gibbs and Forrest after WWI:

> They were either typewriter statesmen turning out dope stuff drearily dreamed up, or sentimental human-interest scribblers turning out maudlin stuff about the common soldier...Any honest effort to get the real news went out the window with the arrival of voluntary censorship...The papers fell over themselves thinking up schemes for hobbling themselves that the military hadn't thought of.[xxiv]

The voluntary censorship Mencken referred to was indeed voluntary because the press corps had agreed to it, and had even helped draft the terms before the war began.[xxv]

[xxiii] Young and Jesser, *The Media and the Military*, 41.
[xxiv] Cited in: Robert W. Desmond. *Tides of War: World News Reporting 1940-1945.* (Iowa: University of Iowa Press, 1984.) 463.
[xxv] Desmond, *Tides of War*, 92.

But WWII censorship, voluntary or otherwise, is not universally regarded as a bad thing. Much like the agreed upon restrictions placed on embeds in 2003 in Iraq and Afghanistan, in the form of a signed contract, some WWII correspondents regard censorship as a necessary trade-off for access. Walter Cronkite, a United Press (UP) war correspondent from 1941 to the end of the Nuremberg trials, said the censorship arrangement worked well in the Second World War: "I believe – in that system – censorship is necessary in those cases where they give us full freedom of the battlefield."[xxvi]

And while some observers like Mencken may have criticized the quality of the coverage, the quantity was unlike anything prior. The American press corps alone had 800 full-time staffers in Europe in 1939, compared to twenty at the outbreak of WWI.[xxvii] In the final year of the war alone, the Supreme Headquarters Allied Expeditionary Force (SHAEF) accredited 1,338 correspondents with Allied troops. An official tally of the number of correspondents from all Allied, Axis and neutral countries has never been conducted, but estimates suggest several thousands.[xxviii]

After the Second World War, the scope and scale of conflict changed. Wars were no longer total, enveloping every element of society. Warfare after WWII was much more limited, often fought by smaller expeditionary forces on battlefields far from Europe. And as the nature of warfare changed, so did the media-military relationship. The

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[xxvi] Judith Sylvester and Suzanne Huffman, *Reporting From the Front: The Media and the Military.* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2005.) 14.
[xxvii] Desmond, *Tides of War*, 83.
[xxviii] Desmond, *Tides of War*, 449.

Vietnam War, in particular, was a watershed event because censorship was never implemented by the American military, and journalists had no interest in censoring themselves. But the period between 1854 – 1945 is the start of the cyclical relationship that would come full circle after the Cold War's end.

Vietnam - Beginning of the End: 1954 – 1975

Trouble was brewing in the East after the Second World War. In China in 1949, Mao Zedong and the Communists swept to victory and established the People's Republic of China. They then intervened on behalf of North Korea during the Korean War. And in Vietnam, France suffered a decisive defeat at the hands of the communist Viet Cong at the battle of Dien Bien Phu in 1954. Under the Geneva Accords, Vietnam was then divided along a de-militarized zone at the 17th parallel. The US had a modest presence in South Vietnam at this time, providing military advisors and aiding president Ngo Dinh Diem's campaign against political dissent. But by 1959, the strength of the northern Vietnamese forces was growing and increasingly infiltrating the south, prompting the US to send more military advisors. After an American warship was allegedly fired on by North Vietnamese forces in the Gulf of Tonkin in 1964, a retaliatory American bombing raid followed. Within three years, 500,000 American combat troops were stationed in Vietnam.

Vietnam quickly became more than a minor peripheral battle in the campaign to contain communism. The Soviet Union and China were supporting the Viet Cong in the North,

and the US was spearheading the effort to support the South. After the Gulf of Tonkin incident in 1964, journalistic interest in Vietnam was piqued.[xxix] And from this point on, it was apparent Vietnam would be an unusually accessible war. Different reasons permeate the academic literature on why journalists were given unprecedented freedom to roam. Sam Sarkesian, in *Parameters*, a US Army War College publication, argues the Pentagon simply had not developed a plan to deal with the press.[xxx] Young and Jesser finger the military's false belief in "an outdated social contract" that promised journalists would support the military's efforts in Vietnam as they had supported their efforts through two World Wars. Knightley supports this assertion: "The American military authorities were bewildered. Correspondents had been patriotic in the Second World War. They had been on side in Korea. What was wrong in Vietnam?"[xxxi] In Reporters on the Battlefield: The Embedded Press System in Historical Context, Christopher Paul and James J. Kim argue unprecedented access was largely designed to satisfy the needs created by "...the growth of television as a popular mainstream medium for prime-time news."[xxxii] And Arthur Lubow, in an essay entitled "Read Some About It," argues Vietnam was not a "declared war" and therefore "the president could not impose military censorship."[xxxiii] Regardless of the reason, the fact remained that this war was covered by a relatively unfettered press corps that relentlessly highlighted the glaring contradictions between official military statements, and the reality of the battlefield.

[xxix] Young and Jesser, *The Media and the Military*. 82.
[xxx] Sam Sarkesian, "Soldiers, Scholars, and the Media." In *Parameters*, September 1987, 82-83, cited in Young and Jesser, *The Media and the Military*, 82.
[xxxi] Knightley, *The First Casualty*, 412.
[xxxii] Christopher Paul and James J. Kim, *Reporters on the Battlefield: The Embedded Press System in Historical Context*. (Santa Monica: Rand Corporation, 2004.) 37.
[xxxiii] Arthur Lubow, "Read Some About It." In *The Media and the Gulf War*, ed. Hedrick Smith (Washington: Seven Locks Press, 1992.) 97.

No incident illustrated the discrepancy between Pentagon spin and reality better than the Tet Offensive. On 31 January, 1968, the North Vietnamese Army and Viet Cong launched strikes on multiple targets in South Vietnam. The most shocking of these was an attempted raid on the United States embassy in Saigon. News networks covered the attack extensively and what many Americans had been led to believe, that victory was but steps away, was shattered. The American public had been told the insurgents were almost defeated; how could they attack a US embassy? As Walter Cronkite said when he learned the news in New York: "What the hell was going on? I thought we were winning the war?"[xxxiv] In strict military terms, the Tet Offensive was a failure for the Communists. But many in the US military establishment argued the news media did not present Tet as the failure it really was, and pegged that news coverage as the beginning of the end of domestic war support. US commander General William Westmoreland stated: "...voluminous, lurid and distorted newspaper and particularly television reporting of the Tet Offensive, had transformed a devastating Communist military defeat into a psychological victory."[xxxv]

More than any other war, Vietnam is regarded as a critical juncture in the history of media-military relations. Over time, conservative Americans both in and out of the military voiced similar sentiments to those of General Westmoreland, and blamed the press for losing the Vietnam War by souring domestic support. The reality, however, is that this is untrue. It is generally agreed upon in contemporary literature that media

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[xxxiv] Knightley, *The First Casualty*, 436.
[xxxv] Young and Jesser, *The Media and the Military*, 91.

reports likely followed, rather than formed, domestic opinion.[xxxvi] Irrespective of the truth, the lasting and mutual distrust that followed is what matters. That legacy of distrust is evident in media-military relations until the Cold War's end, and in some respects, can still be felt today.

Four Point Restraint - The Falkland Islands War, 1982

The British government and Ministry of Defence's (MoD) management of the press during the 1982 campaign in the South Atlantic was regarded for decades as a case study in "good practice."[xxxvii] If the Vietnam War was regarded as a failure from a military public relations standpoint, the Falkland Islands War was a smashing success. Indeed, US military planners looked upon the campaign with affection and admiration as they planned to similarly control the press in the invasions of Grenada, Panama, and Iraq in 1991.[xxxviii]

After the Vietnam War, a term arose to characterize the chill media reports could cast over public opinion: Vietnam Syndrome. Military communications strategists watched as reporters supposedly turned the tide of public opinion against the effort in Vietnam. They sat up, took note of the blunder, and devised tactics to ensure the media could

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[xxxvi] Michael Emery. *On The Front Lines: Following America's Foreign Correspondents across the Twentieth Century.* (Washington: The American University Press, 1995.) 156; Jacqueline E. Sharkey, *Under Fire: US Military Restrictions on the Media From Grenada to the Persian Gulf.* (Washington: The Center for Public Integrity, 1991.) 57; Peter Braestrup, "Censored," *The New Republic*, 6 (1991): 16-17.
[xxxvii] David Welch. "Winning Hearts and Minds: The Changing Context of Reportage and Propaganda, 1900 -2003." In Welch, *War and the Media, Reportage and Propaganda, 1900-2003.* xiii.
[xxxviii] John R. MacArthur, *Second Front: Censorship and Propaganda in the 1991 Gulf War.* (Berkley: University of California Press.) 138.

never again spoil public opinion, and ultimately, lose a war. During the British invasion of the Falkland Islands, this idea was manifested by controlling access to the battlefield and redirecting media attention to messages that supported British policy.

The circumstances surrounding the Falkland Islands War created a perfect opportunity to control media access. In April, the Argentine military regime, headed by General Leopoldo Galtieri, invaded and occupied the long-disputed Falkland Islands, which Britain then possessed. A British expeditionary force was assembled under Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher and sent to reclaim the remote islands, almost 13,000 kilometers from Britain and 600 km from the nearest land mass.

Because the Falklands were so remote, the MoD essentially controlled all access to the battlefield: "The very nature of the campaign...meant that correspondents could not get to the war unless the MoD took them. In return for access to the action the correspondent had to accept MoD ground rules. These were crippling."[xxxix] Censorship for the sake of operational security was an accepted ground rule, but the application of it was used at the discretion of the commanding officer. No comments on operational plans, military capability, tactics, communications, or any possible responses by Argentine forces was allowed. Even morale fell under the umbrella of threats to operational security. Hence, anything that could be considered bad for morale was censored. An example is the suppression of a photograph of the British *HMS Antelope* exploding after being attacked by Argentinean forces. The military blocked its

[xxxix] Knightley, *The First Casualty*, 478.

publication for three weeks as it was considered bad for morale, but it has since become a defining image of the war.[xl]

Once in theatre, journalists complained they were actively hampered by the military in both the gathering and transmission of stories. After arriving near San Carlos, East Falkland, for example, reporters were forced to stay on board the HMS *Hermes* for ten days while battle raged on the island. If reporters did manage to dig up a story, transmitting it to London was another problem. Accusations were leveled that the military used "…'technical' excuses in order to prevent the transmission of visual and written material from the battlefront to London and elsewhere in the UK."[xli]

The result of the aforementioned press limitations and complications was that news about the war increasing came from MoD press conferences and Prime Ministerial statements: "In the prevailing context of delays and corresponding visual vacuum, the domestic reporting of the Falklands crisis assumed considerable importance."[xlii] By controlling access to the story, the MoD shifted attention from the nastiness of the battlefield, to the spin of the press briefing room.

But the limited information Britons were getting about the war was not entirely the fault of the MoD. As in WW1 and WW2, the press corps itself was guilty of bias, self-censorship and patriotism. In The War Correspondent, Greg McLaughlin argues the

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[xl] Klaus Dodds, "Contesting War: British Media Reporting and the 1982 South Atlantic War." In *War and the Media,* eds. Connelly and Welch, 225.
[xli] Dodds, "Contesting War." In *War and the Media*, eds. Connelly and Welch, 223.
[xlii] Dodds, "Contesting War." In *War and the Media*, eds. Connelly and Welch, 225.

MoD deliberately failed to tell correspondents what they could not include in their reports, so the burden of checking was always on reporters: "In effect, journalists were cooperating with a system that put the onus of censorship not on the authorities but on themselves."[xliii] Knightley agrees that reporters must bear some of the responsibility: "Despite its skills, the MoD could not have achieved what it did without some compliance from the British media; if it was rape, then it was rape with contributory negligence."[xliv] For example, the *British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC)* found itself the target of numerous attacks from other media organizations for unpatriotic news coverage. Rupert Murdoch's paper the *Sun* called *BBC* commentator Peter Snow one of the "traitors in our midst" after Snow publicly compared British and Argentinean versions of events.[xlv] In a *Daily Express* story under the headline WHY NONE OF US CAN BE NEUTRAL IN THIS WAR, correspondent Max Hastings wrote the British press corps had decided even before reaching the battlefield their job was to report "as sympathetically as possible" the activities of the British military. *Independent Television News (ITN)* reporter Michael Nicholson, with fourteen wars under his belt, said the Falklands War was different because, "This was Britain's war. It was my war."[xlvi]

A combination of access control, political spin, and journalistic nationalism meant British news consumers were getting a narrow view of the war. With a few exceptions, little issue was raised about why Britain was fighting over remote islands thousands of

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[xliii] Greg McLaughlin, *The War Correspondent*. (London: Pluto Press, 2002.) 80.
[xliv] Knightley, *The First Casualty*. 481.
[xlv] Sharkey, *Under Fire*. 64.
[xlvi] Knightley, *The First Casualty*. 481-482.

kilometers from home. During Total War, journalistic objectivity is understandably more difficult to maintain than in times of limited war, as the Falkland Islands War was. The British government's control of the media, and the media's acquiesces, provided a good model for the military over the next eight years.

Lessons Learned – Grenada: 1983

Operation Urgent Fury, as the American invasion of the island of Grenada was known, commenced in the early morning hours of 25 October, 1983. Maurice Bishop, leader of the New Jewel Movement, deposed Prime Minister Eric Gairy in a leftist coup d'état in 1979. Since the coup, the Reagan Administration observed with growing unhappiness and distrust as Bishop's government extended ties to Cuba and the Soviet Union. But another coup, this time directed against Bishop by his former allies, provided the pretext for the US invasion.

Nearly two thousand Army and Marine Corps soldiers conducted the invasion of Grenada. Operation Urgent Fury's commanding officer, Vice Admiral Joseph Metcalf, requested that no reporters be permitted to accompany the troops during the initial stages of the operation. His request was granted, and it was not until 48 hours after the invasion began that a pool of 15 reporters, selected from the nearly 600 languishing on neighbouring Barbados, were escorted onto the island. Access was opened to all on the

fifth day after the invasion began, but unfortunately for the press, the fighting was all wrapped up within the two days so there was very little to see.[xlvii]

There is a general agreement in much of the academic literature that the experiences of Vietnam and the Falkland Islands factored importantly in the Pentagon's restrictive press policy for the invasion of Grenada.[xlviii] Some of the Pentagon's top officers during the Grenada invasion had been junior officers during the Vietnam era.[xlix] They harboured ill-will towards the media and believed losing public opinion meant losing wars. Both vice admiral Joseph Metcalf III and his second in command, major general Norman Schwarzkopf, were vociferous opponents of free media access dating from the Vietnam era.[l] Hence, they looked upon the British handling of the press during the Falkland Islands War with admiration: "The British military's complete control over reporters during the 1982 Falklands War served as the model for [the] American military's stringent control of the media in Grenada," wrote Charles Moskos in The Media and the Military in Peace and Humanitarian Operations.[li]

But just like the Falklands, it is impossible to place the finger of blame entirely on the military. In Battle Lines: Report of the Twentieth Century Fund Task Force on the Military and the Media, Peter Braestrup argues reporters were essentially lazy in their coverage of Grenada and missed obvious contradictions and exaggerations in official

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[xlvii] Paul and Kim, *Reporters on the Battlefield*, 39.
[xlviii] Sharkey, *Under Fire*, 66; Young and Jesser, *The Media and the Military*, 120; Paul and Kim, *Reporters on the Battlefield,* 39.
[xlix] Paul and Kim, *Reporters on the Battlefield*, 39.
[l] Sharkey, *Under Fire*, 70.
[li] Cited in: Paul and Kim, *Reporters on the Battlefield*, 40.

source briefings.[lii] Martin Hertsgaard, in On Bended Knee: The Press and the Reagan Presidency, points out the fundamentally damaging habit of the American news media to take government information as a truth, and not question its propaganda value.[liii]

Instead of turning the accusatory eye inward, the media leveled accusations that the Pentagon and Reagan Administration had violated its rights under the First Amendment. The only legal challenge, however, was launched by porno-guru and *Hustler* publisher Larry Flynt, who argued the military's tactics were unconstitutional. A Washington court ruled against Flynt and stated future restrictions against reporters on the battlefield would be up to the military commanders.[liv]

But the government did appoint a retired major general, Winant Sidle, to lead a commission to review the Pentagon's press policy and make recommendations for future conflicts. The resulting report, the Sidle Report, led to the creation of the National Media Pool in 1985. The pool was designed to allow a small, pre-selected and rapidly deployable coterie of reporters to cover breaking combat operations or those organized in secret. Their work would then be shared amongst other news media organizations. In theory, the Sidle Report and the pool system should have effectively prevented the kind of outright press exclusion the military engaged in during the invasion of Grenada. The reality, however, was quite different and the National Media Pool was used as a cover to limit media access.

[lii] Peter Braestrup, *Battle Lines: Report of the Twentieth Century Fund Task Force on the Military and the Media.* (New York: Priority Press Publications, 1985.)
[liii] Martin Hertsgaard, *On Bended Knee: The Press and the Reagan presidency.* (New York: Farrar, 1988.)
[liv] McLaughlin, *The War Correspondent*, 85.

Pooled – Panama: 1989

The first major test of the National Media Pool was during the American invasion of Panama on 20 December, 1989. In the largest exercise of US military might since the Vietnam War, 24,000 troops were deployed to arrest long-time ally and Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) intelligence asset, General Manuel Antonio Noriega.

In November, the White House and the Pentagon ramped up planning for an invasion of Panama, including discussions on how to deal with the media.[lv] With the invasion of Grenada and the recommendations of the Sidle Report still fresh in planners' minds, the National Medial Pool was invoked to cover the invasion. Unfortunately, Secretary of Defense Richard Cheney decided to erect roadblocks in order to hamper the media's ability to cover the war: "It was a calculated decision, based on the perceived need to avoid any evidence of lack of success, or coverage of the normal difficulties that can be expected in the opening phase of any campaign."[lvi]

First, invoking the National Media Pool itself was a stalling technique. That pool was based in Washington. It would have been more efficient to draw a pool from journalists already based in Panama City. Secretary Cheney then decided to notify the pool of the impending invasion so late that it was impossible for reporters to cover the opening hours of the conflict. To make matters worse, military public affairs officers were not

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[lv] Sharkey, *Under Fire*, 92.
[lvi] Young and Jesser, *The Media and the Military*, 140.

told they would be dealing with reporters until mere hours before the invasion began. So, when the press finally arrived, logistic arrangements had not been made and reporters had no transportation. Not that any of this mattered, as the military had no intention of letting them anywhere near the battlefield. Instead, after arriving four hours late, reporters were ushered into a holding room and given a lesson on contemporary Panamanian history: "We watched television, we got a cup of coffee," complained Kevin Merida of *Dallas Morning News*. "We actually watched a Bush news conference."[lvii]

The situation did not significantly improve over the next few days. Reporters were finally given access, but transportation continued to be a problem and commanders on the battlefield had not been informed they would be dealing with the media, or briefed on military public affairs guidelines. Some did not know what to say, or simply refused to talk. Photographers were not allowed to take pictures of caskets, damaged helicopters or wounded soldiers. Transmitting stories and photographs back to the US took hours. And spokesmen at military press briefings in Panama and Washington consistently spat out misinformation, half-truths, and lies regarding friendly fire incidents, civilian casualties, and Noriega's alleged cocaine habits.

The military's attempt at managing the press is considered a "gaffe" in some post-war analysis.[lviii] Following Panama, Colin Powell, then Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, circulated a memorandum stating: "Commanders are reminded that the media

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[lvii] Sharkey, *Under Fire*, 94.
[lviii] Paul and Kim, *Reporters on the Battlefield*, 41.

aspects of military operations are important...Media coverage and pool support requirements must be planned simultaneously with operational plans."[lix] The military also ordered a review panel, headed by former Associated Press correspondent and DoD spokesman, Fred S. Hoffman, to draft a report analyzing media-military relations during the war.

But the undeniable fact is that the information side of the war was well managed from a military perspective. There was effectively a media blackout in place during the initial stages of the war, masking the violent reality of what was going on. An example was the unscrutinized shelling of Noriega's headquarters in the El Chorrillo neighbourhood of Panama City, in which 300 civilians were killed, some burned alive in their homes.[lx] The military's management of the press in Panama followed a now-familiar pattern: create a battlefield blackout during the initial stages of the war so press emphasis necessarily has to rely on positive official briefings and statements. After the most violent opening hours and days of the conflict have passed, grant some access. In Second Front, MacArthur espouses this theory and argues the strategy was a lesson learned from the Vietnam era:

> "Keep wars short and keep the news media completely controlled in the opening days of the engagement. By maintaining total control of the initial image in a military action, the government can create the framework into which the public thereafter fits subsequent information. By severely limiting reporting by journalists, the government can

[lix] Paul and Kim, *Reporters on the Battlefield*, 41.
[lx] MacArthur, *Second Front*, 16.

> prolong that controlled public image of a military action until the media move to something else and lost interest in the event."[lxi]

This idea was proved true yet again in the next major American conflict: the Gulf War.

Divided and Conquered - Gulf War: 1991

In managing the press during the war with Iraq in 1991, the American military perfected the technique of shifting media emphasis to official briefings, controlling the tone of news coverage, and controlling the context in which news was reported. They had learned their lessons since Vietnam. Unfortunately, the same cannot be said for the American news media. The military, once again, invoked the pool system, deployed with so much journalistic dissatisfaction during the invasion of Panama, and it did so with very little organized opposition. In the Gulf War, perhaps more than any other conflict up to this point, the media, through apathy and competitive instinct, assisted the military in stifling journalistic freedom and essentially helped shackle themselves.

The US-led aerial bombardment of Iraq began on 16 January, 1991. Iraqi forces invaded and annexed Kuwait, to worldwide condemnation, in August, 1990. A United Nations resolution gave Iraq until 15 January, 1991, to leave Kuwait and when this did not happen, the coalition bombs started to fall.

[lxi] MacArthur, *Second Front*, xv.

The Pentagon granted media access through the pool system. The initial ground rules stated, upon the commencement of war, access to US operations would only be granted through pooling. Public affairs escorts would accompany media at all times, and would review all pool reports for reasons of operational security. Once pooled reporters were with their units, more limitations were imposed. For example, after passing the censors, press copy would be transmitted by the military; any independent means of transmission, like cell phones, were banned, as was independent transport. In total, 186 reporters were pooled with US fighting units and pooling, designed to be used only during the opening stages of the conflict, became the standard for the entire war.[lxii]

After learning the Pentagon planned to again pool reporters, there was an outcry. The National Media Pool had failed reporters miserably during the invasion of Panama and reporters were loathe to use it again. However, after a series of meetings between the charismatic US assistant secretary of defence, Pete Williams, and the titans of the American news media, including executives from *The Wall Street Journal*, *The New York Times*, *Time* magazine, plus the four major US television news networks, objections to the overall pool system slowly dissolved into objections over the logistics of working within the system itself. In Second Front, MacArthur demonstrates how Williams successfully steered objections about the system into journalistic competition to work within it: "Among the media and the Pentagon bureaucrats in Washington, the argument was not about the constitutional principles but about the number and duration of visas to be made available for each news organization."[lxiii]

[lxii] Paul and Kim, *Reporters on the Battlefield*, 42.
[lxiii] MacArthur, *Second Front*, 8.

The aforementioned constitutional principles were the basis of a lawsuit launched against the Pentagon by a group of smaller media organizations and four individual reporters. But again, journalistic competition reared its ugly head and the heavyweights refused to join the lawsuit for fear of losing their favourable pool slots.[lxiv] Without broad support, the lawsuit accomplished virtually nothing.

After the aerial bombardment stopped on February 23, American ground troops advanced to wipe up what remained of Iraqi resistance. Fierce competition to secure favourable pool slots meant reporters in the field were in no mood to help each other out. Robert Fisk, a reporter with Britain's the *Independent*, managed to travel unilaterally to the Iraqi-controlled Saudi Arabian border town of Khafji to investigate claims allied troops had reclaimed it. He discovered the town was not under allied control and Iraqi forces were still fighting. Upon seeing the unilateral Fisk, a pooled *NBC* reporter cursed him, told him to leave, and then called a Marine public affairs officer to chase him away: "For the *NBC* reporter, however, the privileges of the pool and the military rules attached to it were more important than the right of journalists to do their job," wrote Fisk after the war.[lxv]

The potent mix of restricted access and journalistic competition resulted in very limited coverage of the war. "The Gulf War is over and the press lost," said Pentagon

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[lxiv] Knightley, *The First Casualty*, 490.
[lxv] Robert Fisk, "Out of the Pool." In *The Media and the Gulf War*, ed. Hedrick Smith, 146.

spokesman Barry Zorthian to a National Press Club forum in March, 1991. [lxvi] The Gulf War has since been called a "video-game" war, a "Nintendo" war, and a "sterilized" war. This is partly because pooling so successfully controlled what journalists saw. It is also because pooling was coupled with frequent, detailed press briefings that news networks relied upon heavily to gather information about the war. At the briefings, sanitizing language was used to remove the human element from combat. Journalists were also provided with footage, compliments of the military, of precision weapons destroying targets, and willingly incorporated them into their reports. As Knightley concludes, in the Persian Gulf the US military successfully changed the perception of war. It was no longer the stuff of blood, guts, and body counts; instead, war was fought between machines with limited human involvement and suffering.

Perhaps the greatest indicator of the military's success is the fact that the public was generally satisfied with the news they were receiving. Gallup poll data collected between January 17 – 19, 1991 indicates 89 per cent of the public felt press coverage was "good" or "excellent," and between January 30 and February 2, 79 per cent of people felt the same way.[lxvii] A University of Massachusetts poll, conducted February 2 – 3, came to similar conclusions.[lxviii] Since then, the Pentagon's claims of perfect Tomahawk missile accuracy with few civilian casualties has been debunked. But at the time, the public took the information presented by reporters and military spokespeople as fact.

[lxvi] Knightley, *The First Casualty*, 500.
[lxvii] Paul and Kim, *Reporters on the Battlefield*, 43.
[lxviii] John Leo, "Lessons from a sanitized war." In *US News and World Report*, 110 (1991) 26.

Conclusion

Retrospectively, the news media does blame itself for dropping the ball since Vietnam. Washington bureau chief for *Time* magazine, Stanley Cloud, summed it up: "Throughout the long evolution of the Department of Defense pool, the press willingly, passively, and stupidly went along with it. That is the original sin which got us where we are, and I don't blame anybody as much as I blame us."

The history of media-military relations therefore demonstrates the military will use the press to justify its actions and further its aims. It also shows how easily, and sometimes even willingly, media weaknesses can be exploited and taken advantage of to help advance those aims. The next system used to grant media access was embedding, and the question to be answered is whether embedding is simply another link in a chain of military manipulation and media weakness, or a genuine improvement on previous systems.

Chapter Two

Theory

The outbreak of hostilities in 1853 between Catholic France and Orthodox Russia marked the beginning of a conflict, the Crimean War, that would have far-reaching implications for war correspondence. As examined in the previous chapter, William Howard Russell of *The Times* of London was dispatched by his editor to cover the war, marking a distinct and permanent departure from previous methods of war coverage. War reporting became a calling within the journalism trade itself that would from then on captivate some reporters, their editors and ultimately their readers.

But it was the end of a different and greater conflict, some 65 years after Russell was first sent to cover Crimea that saw the birth of news management by governments in the West. With World War One (WW1) over and Germany beaten and temporarily cowed, leaders of the victorious Allied nations and representatives of their defeated enemies gathered in France for the Paris Peace Conference of 1919. Along with the scores of diplomats and leaders who gathered in Paris in that year were the journalists of the international press corps. The Paris Peace Conference was supposed to be an open, publicized conference for the people and publics of the world to witness through the fourth estate. Ray Stannard Baker, a former reporter and American president Woodrow Wilson's top aide and facilitator of the American Press Bureau in Paris, stated:

> One fact stands out at the Paris Peace Conference as distinctive and determining: the fact that the people of the world, publics, were there *represented* and *organized* as never before at any peace conference. At the older conferences, the diplomats occupied the entire stage, bargained, arranged, and secretly agreed; but at Paris democracy, like the blind god

> in Dunsan's play, itself comes lumbering roughly, powerfully, out upon the stage.[i]

Unfortunately for Baker, the news media, and the publics they reported for, the Paris Peace Conference failed to illuminate the democratic process in action. In fact, negotiations in Paris were largely veiled in secrecy. Wilson had promised "open covenants of peace openly arrived at" which effectively translated into a promise to not enter into any secret agreements with the other actors at the table.[ii] Implicit in Wilson's treatment of information at the Conference was recognition that publicity itself had become a political issue. In debates surrounding American foreign policy at this time, attention was focused not only on the substance of political decisions like those reached in Paris in 1919, but also on the processes governments took to reach those decisions: "The legitimacy of procedure, as well as the effectiveness of outcome, became an issue."[iii]

American correspondents complained to President Wilson about the secretive nature of the Conference. Wilson's secretary in Washington, Joseph Tumulty, warned the president he was cultivating an aura of distrust with the news media. When a draft of the peace treaty was completed five months later, the United States (US) Congress had to pass a resolution to obtain a copy amidst fear of publicizing the terms. Wilson's tactics to control the flow of information foreshadowed future practices. Just six years earlier, Congress demonstrated its unwillingness to exercise these kinds of peacetime

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[i] Michael Schudson, *Discovering the News: A Social History of American Newspapers*. (New York: Basic Books, Inc., 1978.) 164.
[ii] Schudson, *Discovering the News*, 165.
[iii] Schudson, *Discovering the News*, 165.

information controls by refusing government agencies the right to hire public relations staff. But in Paris in 1919, a milestone had been reached. A major Western power had controlled peacetime news in an organized and calculated way: "This dramatized, as nothing before could have, that government management of news would be a permanent condition of modern society."[iv]

Communication Strategy and Theory

Since 1919 and the Paris Peace Conference, government control of the news media in peacetime has developed and become vastly more sophisticated in Canada, the United Kingdom, the United States, and likely much of the rest of the world. In the context of this discussion, only the three aforementioned countries will be examined in detail. Public relations strategizing has expanded beyond governments and spread to businesses, non-governmental organizations, and even personal crusaders with public relations staff aiming to gain access to the news and influence coverage. And the twists, turns and trends in public relations strategy have been documented and dissected in the academic field of media sociology. In recent years, scholars have put the power wielded by sources at the forefront of the discussion. They recognize that news sources are not always passive actors, called upon by journalists to bear honest witness to events. Instead, sources, from one-man activists to 24 Sussex Drive, proactively push

[iv] Schudson, *Discovering the News*, 166.

or resist access to information to achieve communicative goals:

> The relationship between sources and journalists resembles a dance, for sources seek access to journalists, and journalists seek access to sources. Although it takes two to tango, either sources or journalists can lead, but more often than not, sources do the leading.[v]

In Deciding What's News, Herbert J. Gans described the relationship between journalists and sources as a dance in which the latter takes charge. That work, published as an examination of *CBS*, *NBC*, *Newsweek* and *Time* magazine in 1979, is one of the few Cold War-era examinations of the press that emphasized the importance of sources. He continues:

> My observations on source power suggest that the study of sources deserves far more attention from news researchers than it has so far obtained. To understand the news fully, researchers must study sources as roles and as representatives of the organized or unorganized groups for whom they act and speak, and thus also as holders of power. Above all, researchers should determine what groups create or become sources, and with what agendas; what interests they pursue in seeking access to the news and in refusing it.[vi]

With the exception of Gans and a few other like-minded news scholars, most media sociology prior to the 1990's focused on the news media itself. Academic literature abounds on the biases of journalists and news organizations, on source selection, and on

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[v] Herbert J. Gans, *Deciding What's News: A Study of CBS Evening News, NBC Nightly News, Newsweek, and Time.* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1979.) 116.
[vi] Gans, *Deciding What's News*, 360.

the journalistic habit of drawing on official sources like government representatives, academics and experts of various stripes. In "Rethinking the Sociology of Journalism: Source Strategies and the Limits of Media-Centrism," Philip Schlesinger states this has created "a major lacuna in the existing literature." He argues, "Despite two decades of productive work in media sociology, the relations between media and sources have remained under-conceptualized....at issue is the excessive *media-centrism* of much existing research."[vii] Schlesinger and Gans argue media sociologists have overemphasized the importance of journalists, and underemphasized the importance of their sources.

What has emerged in the last fifteen years is an attempt to isolate and define communication strategy from the source perspective. This area of research puts a finger on the goals and motivations of sources to enter or to block an encounter with a journalist. In broad conceptual terms, media sociologist and professor Jerry Palmer provides one of the clearest definitions of what constitutes a communication strategy from a source perspective. In Spinning Into Control: News Values and Source Strategies, he writes:

> The combination of motives and techniques constitutes a strategy...In particular, sources attempt to use access to the news media in order to achieve event profiles that are in accordance with their purposes – and may include,

[vii] Philip Schlesinger, "Rethinking the Sociology of Journalism: Source Strategies and the Limits of Media-Centrism," in *Public Communication: The New Imperatives*. Ed. Marjorie Ferguson. (London: Sage Publications, 1990.) 61.

> paradoxically, avoidance of contact with the media in order to achieve silence, or indeed any other technique which produces silence.[viii]

According to Palmer, motive and technique equals strategy. His work is a thorough survey of previous academic literature in this field and he comes to a number of generalizations about communications strategy. Palmer also documents two case studies in which these elements are at play. He looks at the methods and motivations behind the Downing Street press office efforts to keep a lid on scandals; he also examines the famous *Brent Spar* tanker occupation by Greenpeace activists in the Atlantic Ocean in 1995. Other academic works also examine source motives and techniques. In Negotiating Control: A Study of News Sources, researchers Richard Ericson, Patricia Baranek and Janet Chan examine these elements at work in various Canadian institutions.[ix] They examine the news culture of the courts, police stations, legislatures and private sectors, in addition to Canadian newsrooms. In Treacherous Estate, Michael Leapman explores the issue by examining the relationship between the press and the major institutions in England, including the monarchy.[x] John Maltese explains source strategy by investigating the relationship between the press and the White House Office of Communication in Spin Control.[xi] What all these works share is that they examine the power of sources to define, influence and even control the news. They are filling the academic "lacuna" Schlesinger made reference to. Palmer's

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[viii] Jerry Palmer, *Spinning Into Control: News Values and Source Strategies.* (London: Leicester University Press, 2000.) 58.
[ix] Richard V. Ericson et al, *Negotiating Control: A Study of News Sources.* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1989.)
[x] Michael Leapman, *Treacherous Estate: The Press after Fleet Street.* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1992.)
[xi] John Anthony Maltese, *Spin Control: The White House Office of Communications and the Management of Presidential News.* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1992.)

work draws on these, and many others, to build his case for a generalized statement that sources strategize to achieve communicative goals, and that strategy is comprised of motive and technique.

While neither Palmer nor the other aforementioned authors apply their ideas directly to the military, they nonetheless hold true when they are applied. Behind each of the major conflicts outlined in the previous chapter, the military, and the government on whose behalf it acts, employed a communication strategy comprised of motive and technique. In World War One Britain, the Ministry of Defence and Downing Street used censorship and propaganda to ensure recruits, willing sacrifice of the basic amenities of home life, and ultimately victory. In South East Asia, working on the false assumption the press would support the government's aims, the Pentagon granted virtual free access to the battlefields of Vietnam. In the South Atlantic, Margaret Thatcher blocked all access to the Falkland Islands to shift emphasis from the war to press room. In 1991 Iraq, the Pentagon pooled reporters and ferried them from place to place to limit access and present a bloodless, robotic war. And in contemporary Afghanistan and Iraq, the Canadian and American militaries employed the system of embedding.

In order to apply the common definition of source strategy to the military, it is necessary to ascertain what the military wants from the media. To rephrase the question, what is the motivation of military policy makers to enter "the news

encounter"?[xii] Next, what techniques are available to achieve their communicative goals? To do this, it is necessary to examine the broad institutional principles that govern both the Canadian and American militaries. It is also necessary to isolate differences between the two. They are unique institutions, acting on behalf of very different governments and publics. This is also a central nuance that needs to be made clear to bolster the thrust of this argument: for journalists, the Canadian system of embedding was an improvement on the American one, but that was due to circumstantial differences in operations, rather than an ideological benevolence of the Canadian military.

From the literature on source behavior, source motivation for entering the news encounter can be boiled down to a number of thematic generalizations which apply to the military. These are the public right to know, building positive public relations, and the need to establish and maintain media credibility.[xiii] And in the context of the military, the need to avoid an information vacuum should also be addressed. There are also a range of public relations techniques identified in the literature which are available to the military to shape the news. But one technique, absorption, most clearly embodies the strategy behind embedding.

[xii] Palmer, *Spinning Into Control*, 3.
[xiii] Palmer, *Spinning Into Control*, 47.

Source Motivations:
Public Right to Know

In societies with elected governments, the public right to know is an important consideration when making policy decisions. It is by no means the only factor and is rightly balanced with other considerations such as national security, privacy, and confidentiality. But, an informed public is a crucial pillar in upholding democracy. Palmer argues that "there is a general presumption in democratic societies that some degree of practical recognition of the right to know is an integral part of the political order."[xiv]

In times of national crisis, the public demands information. This is the line Joan Deppa took in her examination of the bombing of Pan Am flight 103 over Lockerbie Scotland in 1988. In The Media and Disasters: Pan Am 103, she argues intense public scrutiny made the rescue and investigative organizations restructure themselves to balance the conflicting demands of the investigation with the public right to know. That is, the public right to know affected the very nature of the investigative organizations.[xv] The public right to know is also a consideration for police forces. Philip Schlesinger argues fulfilling the mandate of informing the public and remaining open and accountable is a key concern for police policy makers in his work Reporting Crime: The Media Politics of Criminal Justice.[xvi]

[xiv] Palmer, *Spinning Into Control*, 47.
[xv] Joan Deppa, *The Media and Disasters, Pan Am 103*. (New York: New York University Press, 1994.) Cited in Palmer, *Spinning Into Control*.
[xvi] Philip Schlesinger and Howard Tumber, *Reporting Crime: The Media and Politics of Criminal Justice*. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994.) Cited in Palmer, *Spinning Into Control*.

During wars, perhaps more than any other event, the public right to know is drawn tightly into focus. Wars involve massive expenditures of money and human life. For example, a limited war like that in Iraq today has, according to an October 2005 Congressional Research Service report, cost $251-billion in appropriated or obligated funds. Also in October 2005, the US death toll broke the 2000 mark, along with countless Iraqis. The public cannot reasonably be expected to make these monetary and human sacrifices without being well informed about the politics and conduct of combat. As early as the Civil War-era in the US, military thinkers were asserting the importance of the public right to know. In the introduction to a work entitled The Military Policy of the United States, written in 1880, Major General Emory Upton declared:

> The people who, under the war powers of the Constitution, surrender their liberties and give up their lives and property have a right to know why our wars are unnecessarily prolonged. They have a right to know whether disasters have been brought about through the neglect and ignorance of Congress, which is intrusted with the power to raise and support armies, or through military incompetency. Leaving their representatives free to pay their own salaries, the people have a right to know whether they have devoted their time to studying the art of government. John Adams wrote the maxim that 'The national defense is the cardinal duty of the statesman."[xvii]

Today, the idea of the public right to know is embodied in the Principles of Information, the "underlying public affairs philosophy" for the Department of Defense. The first point states: "It is Department of Defense policy to make available timely and accurate information so that the public, the Congress, and the news media may assess and

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[xvii] Emory Upton, *The Military Policy of the United States*. (New York: Greenwood Press, 1904.) xi-xii.

understand the facts about national security and defense strategy."[xviii] In Canada, the public right to know the conduct of the Canadian Forces (CF) is embodied in the Public Affairs Policy section of the Defence Administrative Orders and Directives (DOAD), which provides a framework for the policies of the Canadian military. With regards to information policy, the orders state:

> Canadians expect and deserve to know what the men and women of the CF (Canadian Forces) and DND (Department of National Defence) do on their behalf. Public support for the CF and DND follows from public understanding of how the CF and DND make a difference at home and abroad...The intent of the PA policy is to ensure that Canadians are well-informed and aware of the role, mandate, operations and contributions of the CF and DND.[xix]

The literature on source motivations squarely identifies the public right to know as one reason for entering the news encounter. It is accepted that public knowledge of societal institutions is both necessary and desirable. While the literature does not specifically apply this reasoning to warfare, it does stand true when applied to the actions of the Canadian and American militaries. Undoubtedly there are many times when a military wants its actions to remain secret. The invasions of the Falkland Islands and Grenada are examples. But, officially at least, the public right to know is an overarching institutional principle both militaries share.

[xviii] United States Department of Defense. (http://www.defenselink.mil/admin/prininfo.html)
[xix] Department of Defence/Canadian Forces, "Defence administrative orders and directives, 2008-0," *Public Affairs Policy*. (http://www.admfincs.forces.gc.ca/admfincs/subjects/daod/2008/0_e.asp)

Public Relations and Public Support

The term "public relations" implies a relationship. In this, it is different than other publicity techniques, like "public communications." While it is true both seek to influence opinions and ultimately behaviour, communications is a much more one sided exercise. Transparency is not the concern of public communications; propaganda is.[xx] In looking at source motivations generally and embedding specifically, public relations is the more appropriate term. The Canadian and US militaries do not operate in a vacuum. They are subject to the rules of government and the will of the electorate. Well managed public relations help the military build public support, bolster their public profile and occupy an important place society's landscape.

As noted, CF public relations strategy seeks to, "...ensure that Canadians are well-informed and aware of the role, mandate, operations and contributions of the CF and DND." A more pointed assessment of the CF public relations goals is instilled in the Public Affairs Plan, released under the Access to Information Act, which was drawn up for Operation Friction – Canadian involvement in the Gulf War beginning in August 1990:

> The rationale for the Canadian Forces has been under increasing criticism in recent years especially as "peace is breaking out all over." The Navy's participation in the multi-national force could have far reaching implications

[xx] Ray Eldon Hiebert, "Public relations and propaganda in framing the Iraq war: a preliminary review." In *Public Relations Review.* (Vol. 29, 2003.) 244.

> in balancing this attitude with a more realistic view...This opportunity to maximize media coverage and encourage popular support for the Canadian Forces must be actively encouraged when viewed in a macro sense vis a vis the future of the Canadian Navy in particular and the Canadian Forces in general.[xxi]

This makes it clear the CF want to "maximize" media coverage in order to shine a spotlight on their work, build public support and counter the prevailing public indifference to the Canadian military in the early 1990's. In the US, the situation is quite different. The American military typically enjoys more public support and vastly larger budgets than Canada's military. For example, Canada's military expenditures as a percentage of gross domestic product (GDP) in 2003 was just 1.1 per cent; in the US last year, 3.3 per cent of the GDP was dedicated to the military.[xxii]

Despite this difference, the military in the US still needs public support in much the same way as the CF, and positive public relations remains an important institutional goal. The US military currently adheres to a "3 P" public relations strategy: performance, professionalism and persuasion: "If the military can effectively convey its performance and professionalism, it can persuade the public to support it."[xxiii] And to do this, the military needs to show off the good work of its soldiers and technology by granting access to its operations. Typically, the success of military public relations depends on the level of access it allows. When reporters are denied access, not only do

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[xxi] Department of National Defence, "Operation Friction, Public Affairs Plan." (ATIP # A-2003-00394) 106.
[xxii] Central Intelligence Agency, "The World Factbook." (http://www.cia.gov/cia/publications/factbook/index.html)
[xxiii] Christopher Paul and James J. Kim, *Reporters on the Battlefield: The Embedded Press System in Historical Context*. (Santa Monica: Rand Corporation, 2004.) 24.

they shift their focus to official sources, they also tend to focus on the denial of access itself, not the military operation.[xxiv] This not only wastes an opportunity to demonstrate the workings of the military and bring it to the forefront of the public consciousness, failing to enter the news encounter also creates a damaging impression of secrecy.

In the US and Canada, public support is essential for the military to function and thrive. But it is important to note the differing level of success these neighbouring militaries have had in communicating their importance to their respective publics. In the US, the military typically enjoys more public support than in Canada. Recently, the CF have earned bigger budgets and an enhanced public profile. However, as will be detailed in Chapter Four, the Canadian military still believes it needs to make serious efforts to build and maintain public support.

Media Credibility

The public right to know is an important ideological reason for sources to enter the news encounter. Building public support is an equally important, if more self-serving reason, to act as a journalist's source. Another oft-cited reason to enter the news encounter is to establish a relationship with reporters and build long-term credibility in the press. To do this, sources need to understand news values, be timely, interesting and authoritative. As Palmer notes:

[xxiv] Paul, *Reporters on the Battlefield*, 24.

> Organizations have an interest in ensuring the flow of information to news media which is analytically distinct from an interest in the actual information in question, because the reputation for reliability is useful in organizing their relationship with the media (or particular news organization) in the long term.[xxv]

Palmer identifies the "moment of crisis" as that in which a credible reputation with the media is the most important for an organization. Following a crisis, having an established, credible relationship with the press is "spectacularly useful" in being believed, managing and maintaining the fallout from the crisis, and getting a positive message back in the headlines.[xxvi]

Media credibility also has additional benefits for source organizations. One of these is simply building a public profile. Being called on frequently as an expert voice is a good way to publicize a person and the organization he or she is affiliated with. Another benefit is that journalists may sometimes be willing to publicize non-newsworthy events in order to maintain a relationship with a credible source and get more important information in the future. In Leon Sigal's Reporters and Officials: The Organization and Politics of Newsmaking, he notes the competitive nature of journalism means reporters become dependant on their most credible sources and will often print whatever they are told: "The incentive to get news first makes reporters willing to play along with their sources in order to obtain disclosures on an exclusive basis."[xxvii] Edie N. Goldenberg also supports this notion. In Making the Papers, he argues clever sources

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[xxv] Palmer, *Spinning Into Control*, 50.
[xxvi] Palmer, *Spinning Into Control*, 50.
[xxvii] Leon V. Sigal, *Reporters and Officials: The Organization and Politics of Newsmaking.* (Lexington: D.C. Heath and Company, 1973.) 56.

establish and cultivate relationships with reporters, "...in which the reporter depends on the source for news and, as a result, the reporter is willing to listen to and act on behalf of the source's interests."[xxviii]

For the military, establishing credibility within the news media can be extremely challenging. A historical legacy of distrust exists on both sides that stems from their very different mission goals: the press wants to access operations and gain information to fulfill their fourth estate function, whereas the military is much more inclined to secrecy to protect operational security. It is a culture of "conformity, control, discipline, accountability, group loyalty and cohesion...up against a group that is individualistic, competitive, word-conscious, impatient [and] lacking for the most part internal rules or standards."[xxix] Essentially, there are institutional differences between the media and the military that can make co-existence uneasy at best. Bernard E. Trainor, a former Marine and *New York Times* correspondent, argues conflicting interests are inevitable:

> The military is hierarchical with great inner pride and loyalties. It is the antithesis of a democracy – and must be so if it is to be effective...the military only wants to be left alone to carry out its assigned mission. To the contrary, the free press – one of the great virtues and elemental constituents of a democracy – is an institution wherein concentration of

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[xxviii] Edie N. Goldenberg, *Making the Papers: The Access of Resource-Poor Groups to the Metropolitan Press*. (Lexington: Lexington Books, 1975.) 134.
[xxix] Peter Braestrup, "Introduction" in *Newsmen and National Defense: Is Conflict Inevitable?* Ed. Lloyd J. Matthews. (Washington: Brassey's Inc., 1991.) xxiii.

> power is viewed as a danger. The press is a watchdog over institutions of power, be they military, political, economic or social.[xxx]

A common complaint amongst military men is that the journalists are profoundly ignorant of even the most basic of military affairs. They say a journalistic "culture of incompetence" clouds the relationship.[xxxi] In Canada, the military feels that in the last decade it has provided vastly more access and information to reporters than even before, but "...there has not been a corresponding increase in the level of experience or understanding on the part of journalists."[xxxii] Reporters, on the other had, argue the military routinely restricts access and spins events. And while there is undoubtedly some truth and lots of prejudice on both sides, the military needs to make the greater effort. In something as profound as war, the news media will report regardless of military cooperation. It is up to the military to use the inevitable press coverage to bolster public and political support.

Information Vacuum

The public right to know, public support and media credibility are three common reasons for entering the news encounter, as outlined in the academic literature. A fourth reason which does not frequently appear in the literature and applies strictly to the

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[xxx] Bernard E. Trainor, "The Military and the Media: A Troubled Embrace" in *Newsmen and National Defence,* 122.

[xxxi] Fred Reed, "A Culture of Incompetence: Why the Daily Press Covers Defense So Poorly," in *Defense Beat: The Dilemmas of Defense Coverage.* Ed. Loren B. Thompson (New York: Lexington Books, 1991.) 123.

[xxxii] Colonel R.M. Williams, "The Truth, the Whole Truth or Nothing: A Media Strategy for the Military in the Information Age," in *Canadian Military Journal.* (Volume 3, Issue 3, 2002) 15.

military is the need to avoid an "information vacuum" during war.[xxxiii] Information is another weapon in conflict; countering the lies and propaganda of an enemy is an important reason for entering the news encounter, and it is also in the military's interest to keep reporters occupied.

As noted, the press will report a story as significant as war regardless of the desire of the military. The Falkland Islands War is a good example, as is coverage of the US invasions of Panama and Grenada. The military can block access, which inevitably leads to accusations of secrecy, but reporters will produce some kind of coverage regardless. In some instances, this can actually benefit the military as it channels the focus of the news media to official government sources. But, if the military does not grant timely information and access to operations, an information vacuum will also emerge.[xxxiv] This poses a number of challenges for the military. First, an information vacuum essentially opens a window for an adversary's information and message. Second, competitive and enterprising reporters will often still pursue the story and put themselves in danger, which can require risky rescue operations. Or, they will acquire the information on an "open market," meaning the story may be damaging to the military.[xxxv] Finally, when the military creates an information void it is also feeding an atmosphere of secrecy. Reporters inevitably wonder what the military has to hide. Not only does this violate its mandate to inform the public, it also damages credibility: "Credibility has everything to do with how [activities are] evidenced and presented.

[xxxiii] William, "The Truth, the Whole Truth of Nothing," in *Canadian Military Journal*, 17.
[xxxiv] William, "The Truth, the Whole Truth of Nothing," in *Canadian Military Journal*, 17.
[xxxv] William, "The Truth, the Whole Truth of Nothing," in *Canadian Military Journal*, 17.

Secrecy can damage credibility."[xxxvi] Essentially, an information vacuum wastes a good public relations opportunity to illuminate military activities, connect with the public, and at the same time exert some control over the message.

Source Techniques: Absorption

In May 1914, John D. Rockefeller Jr. was in the midst of a nasty labour dispute. In September of the previous year, nearly ten thousand coal miners walked off the job and left the coal fields in Ludlow, Colorado. The Colorado Fuel and Iron Company, of which the Rockefeller family was the principal shareholder, was the largest mining company working the Ludlow coal fields and was the employer of many of the striking workers. In October, tensions came to a head when private company guards machine-gunned tents housing hundreds of striking workers. Several people were killed, chaos ensued, and the Colorado State Militia eventually had to restore peace. Public support for the Rockefellers plummeted, and fell further the next year when an accidental shot sparked a gunfight that left more than a dozen dead. "The charred bodies of two dozen women and children show that *Rockefeller knows how to win*," raged the *Cleveland Press*.[xxxvii]

Sensing the crisis was spiraling out of control and doubting the advice of his inner circle, Rockefeller recruited Ivy Ledbetter Lee, a New York publicist with a reputation for honesty and a good sense for public opinion. Lee, who is today regarded as the

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[xxxvi] Paul and Kim, *Reporters on the Battlefield*, 25.
[xxxvii] Hiebert, *Courtier to the Crowd*, 99.

founding father of "modern public relations" devised a strategy for Rockefeller that succeeded in generating sympathetic news reports and turning the tide of public opinion.[xxxviii] It became, in essence, a classic public relations strategy for decades to come, including 90 years later when the US military decided to embed journalists with combat units in Iraq. Lee's strategy was simple: invite reporters, the eyes and ears of the public, to come inside Rockefeller's previously inaccessible offices and look around. They could meet Rockefeller, interview him and other officials, examine documents and observe the conflict from the owner's perspective. The strategy effectively generated sympathetic press by attaching a human face to a previously demonized name:

> One of the reasons for the sympathy is that such reporting tends to humanize the principals. Soldiers in the Iraq War became human beings when the press started sharing their foxholes, just as Ivy Lee engineered the humanizing of John D. Rockefeller, many decades ago, when reporters finally were given personal contact with the multi-millionaire and found him not to be the ogre the muckrakers had depicted.[xxxix]

In the academic literature on source techniques, Lee's method of generating sympathetic press, and the military's method of embedding reporters, fall under the category of "absorption."[xl] The idea is that by proactively granting some access, sources absorb reporters into their culture. Palmer says absorption allows sources to "...direct journalist's attention towards particular interpretations of stories that are likely to be

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[xxxviii] Hiebert, *Courtier to the Crowd*, x.
[xxxix] Hiebert, "Public relations and propaganda in framing the Iraq war." In *Public Relations Review.* (Vol. 29, 2003.) 251.
[xl] Palmer, *Spinning Into Control*, 54; and Sigal, *Reporters and Officials*, 46.

considered newsworthy."[xli] Other techniques are also available to sources to influence news coverage. For example, sources can appeal to journalists' conscience on grounds of national security and good taste; sources can carefully time and place specific bits of information to maximize their impact; sources can tailor information to suit particular news values of specific news organizations; sources can also block access.[xlii] But in the context of the military, the theory of absorption most clearly describes the public relations technique behind embedding. Embedded reporters were literally absorbed into military units to eat, sleep, travel and to report.

Much of the academic literature on absorption focuses on the relationship between beat reporters and sources in various branches of government. For example, Leon Sigal, in Reporters and Officials, documents the absorption of reporters into the culture and workings of the White House. Herbert Gans, in Deciding What's News, expands on Sigal's work and looks at source-reporter interaction on Capital Hill and various other American government institutions. More recently, Richard Ericson examined reporter absorption in the context of the Canadian courts, police stations and legislatures in Negotiating Control.

But all these works, despite the context of their examination, agree absorbed reporters are much more likely to see events through the eyes of their sources than are reporters who are only occasional guests in source institutions. Sometimes, this is due to nothing other than human nature: a reporter cannot come into daily contact over a prolonged

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[xli] Palmer, *Spinning Into Control*, 53.
[xlii] Palmer, *Spinning Into Control*, 52-57.

period of time with a source and not at least partially adopt their perspective.[xliii] Other times, it is in a reporter's self-interest to protect their sources and become part of the culture in order to get inside stories and leaks.[xliv] And by many accounts, absorption makes for better reporting. Sigal argues beat reporters have advantages outside journalists do not: "The reporter with a long-standing relationship with officials on his beat can develop a finely calibrated sensitivity to even the slightest sign of movement on an issue."[xlv] They can detect subtle policy changes, shifts in emphasis and deeper meaning in seemingly ambiguous comments. Beat reporters also develop the specialist knowledge required to report on complex institutions. As noted, a common complaint amongst soldiers is that reporters do not understand the military. After the Vietnam War, there was a divorce between mainstream US society and the US military. The military extended an effort to educated officers on the virtues of the press, but this was not reciprocated in American journalism schools.[xlvi] And in Canada, the workings of the military are outside the daily experience of most Canadians, reporters included. But absorbed reporters, embedded or on a beat, naturally pick up on the terminology, customs and culture of their sources. This gives them a better understanding of how the source institutions operate and a more accurate and authentic voice. Essentially, absorbed reporters are walking a razor's edge between greater understanding and parochialism.

[xliii] Sigal, *Reporters and Officials*, 47.
[xliv] Gans, *Deciding What's News*, 133.
[xlv] Sigal, *Reporters and Officials*, 47.
[xlvi] Braestrup, *Newsmen and National Defense*, xvii.

Conclusion

The history of war reporting is also the history of a slow, steady march towards absorption. It is true that media-military relations have been uneasy during many conflicts. But it is also true that the militaries have, over time, experimented with co-opting the press on progressively larger scales that culminated with the embedding of nearly 800 reporters with US forces in Iraq. During the Crimean War, a concentrated effort by the British military to absorb reporters was not necessary because men like William Howard Russell were so desperate to get to the front, and get to the story, they bought their own horses and uniforms to absorb themselves. But since then, a range of tactics have been deployed to absorb reporters. German Chancellor Carl Otto von Bismarck simply invited newsmen from influential papers, like Archibald Forbes of the *London Scotsman*, to report from his inner sanctum during the major battles of the Franco-Prussian War. Forbes dutifully documented Prussian military brilliance in crushing the French. In World War Two, the US Army gave Ernie Pyle a private's uniform and open access to American GI's to write about life on the front. And during the Korean War, some reporters were very much part General Douglas MacArthur's United Nations fighting force. Many correspondents armed themselves: "The dearest wish of a lot of them was to kill a Korean," wrote Reginald Thompson of the *Daily Telegraph.* "They'd cradle their weapons in their arms and say, 'Today I'll get me a gook'."[xlvii]

[xlvii] Knightley, *The First Casualty*, 368-369.

In the study of journalism and the news media, the majority of early academic literature focused on reporters and news organizations. It was not until the 1990's that media sociologists directed some of their attention towards the strategies employed by sources to achieve communicative goals. There are a few early, notable exceptions, like Leon Sigal and Herbert Gans, whose works are still heavily cited in contemporary examinations of source strategies. But in the last fifteen years, academics have isolated a number of common, generalized motives sources have for entering the news encounter. The public right to know, positive public relations and public image, and building media credibility are three which apply to the military and many other source organiztions. In the context of the military, avoiding an information vacuum is another important consideration. Numerous techniques are also outlined in the literature. One in particular, absorption, as practiced by Ivy Lee in the early 20th century and perfected by assistant secretary of defence for public affairs Victoria Clarke in the early 21st century, forms the backbone of embedding.

Chapter Three

Dynamic Embedding – Iraq 2003

The United States' (US) largest exercise embedding reporters in military units was during the 2003 invasion of Iraq. According to the US Central Command, 775 journalists were embedded with American units at the peak of the program, and another 128 British journalists with United Kingdom (UK) forces.[i] Eighty per cent of embedded reporters were from domestic news organizations, and 20 per cent international. This may have been the largest embedding exercise, but it was by no means the first. The term "embedding" appears occasionally in transcripts of Pentagon press conferences during the Clinton Administration in 1996. It makes another appearance in the same forum in 1999, and then again in 2001. And the concept behind embedding pre-dates the actual term by almost 150 years.

The Pentagon embedded reporters in military units in a very limited way prior to the Iraq War in 2003. In Kosovo in 1999, for example, the Pentagon embedded a small number of reporters, but also heavily restricted what they could see and report on for fear of giving information to the Serbian forces. During the invasion of Afghanistan in 2001, the Pentagon embedded another small handful of reporters on two separate missions. But it was not until the Iraq War, when Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld classified embedding as a "core principle" of the military's public affairs policy, that embedding was formalized and expanded.[ii]

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[i] Heinz Brandenburg, "Journalists Embedded in Culture: War Stories as Political Strategy." In *Bring 'Em On: Media and Politics in the Iraq War*, ed. Lee Artz and Yahya R. Kamalipour. (Lanham: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2005.) 227.

[ii] Brandenburg, "Journalists Embedded in Culture: War Stories as Political Strategy," 227.

Many reporters, editors, professors and experts have analyzed the media-military relationship during the American-led invasion of Iraq. The embedding program takes centre stage in much of the academic analysis. Some literature displays a total lack of confidence in embedded reporting. Former *CNN* producer and media critic Danny Schechter's book, Embedded -- weapons of mass deception: How the media failed to cover the war in Iraq is one example. Tell Me Lies: propaganda and media distortion in the attack on Iraq, edited by David Miller, is another. But careful analysis of the relationship during the first phase of combat in Iraq, that is from 20 March, 2003 to 1 May, 2003, leads to a more nuanced conclusion about the news coverage in general, and embedding in particular.

Debating the journalistic value, or lack of value, of the Pentagon's embedding program diverts attention from a more substantive problem in the media-military relationship in Iraq. Embedding is, after all, just one more method a military can employ to grant access to its operations, complete with its own strengths and weaknesses. As *National Post* correspondent Matthew Fisher said, "All you have with embedding is something you didn't have before."[iii] And after objectively analyzing embedding, it proves to be a journalistically superior system for organizing the media-military relationship than "denial of access" and "press pools," two other systems that are commonly identified in the literature on war reporting.[iv]

[iii] Matthew Fisher, "Live from Baghdad." *Canadian Association of Journalists (CAJ)* Annual Conference, 2003.

[iv] Christopher Paul and James J. Kim, *Reporters on the Battlefield: The Embedded Press System in Historical Context.* (Santa Monica: Rand Corporation, 2004.) 67.

The bigger problem with regards to coverage of the Iraq War had nothing to do with the embedding system itself, in either ideological or practical terms. Rather, the problem was that the Pentagon used the embedding system as a pretext to block reporters from using the fourth commonly identified system of access: "unilateral reporting." Unilateral reporting affords journalists broad freedom of access to travel with a military or to engage in "cowboy" journalism, traveling on their own and at their own risk: "Unilateral journalism is as closely akin as possible to the 'standard' day-to-day model of news reporting and collecting."[v]

News consumers are best served by coverage that includes many perspectives and provides a complete picture of an issue. In the Iraq War, this meant news coverage that included embedded reporting to provide the American military perspective, and unilateral reporting to provide the prospective of the other players, like Iraqi soldiers and civilians. A strong body of evidence supports the assertion that the Pentagon made a calculated decision to block out unilateral journalists, which resulted in news coverage that was generally devoid of multiple perspectives. This was a serious problem in coverage of the Iraq war.

Access to Afghanistan

In the early morning hours of 5 December, 2001, a US B-52 Bomber cut across the dark sky over southern Afghanistan. American ground troops were engaged in a firefight

[v] Paul and Kim, *Reporters on the Battlefield*, 67.

with Taliban fighters near Kandahar City. The B-52 Bomber was in the midst of one of its typically long, 12 to 15 hour, flights over the country. Traditionally, large, heavy bombers like the B-52 are used to attack pre-planned targets and soften the defences of enemy forces before ground troops are sent in. Soldiers on the ground are then provided air support by smaller, nimble strike aircraft. But in Afghanistan during Operation Enduring Freedom, the mission name given to the US "war on terror" following the attacks of 11 September, 2001, smaller strike aircraft like F-14s were in short supply. This, coupled with an increased confidence in the satellite-guided precision bombs on board the B-52, meant its role had changed from long-range bomber, to close air support for ground troops.[vi]

The B-52 flew north over Taliban positions and let loose a 908-kilogram smart bomb, its target coordinates entered into a computer system aboard the plane. A distance of approximately three kilometres separated an American Special Forces unit from a pocket of Taliban fighters in caves. "A 2,000-pound (908 kg) weapon is a devastating weapon," Pentagon spokesman John Stufflebeem told reporters the next day. "As a pilot, when I would drop a 2,000-pound weapon, I wanted at least 4,000 feet of separation from that weapon when it went off."[vii] But when the massive bomb struck earth, it made contact just 100 meters from the American forces. Jefferson Donald Davis, Daniel Henry Petithory, and Brian Cody Prosser were killed, along with five Afghan allies.

[vi] Jonathan Marcus, "Analysis: Risks of New B-52 Role." *BBC Online*, 06 December, 2001. (http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/south_asia/1695292.stm)
[vii] Quoted in Craig Gordon, "Killed by Friendly Fire," *Newsday*, 6 December 2001.

Soon after, the dead and injured American soldiers were transferred back to Forward Operating Base Rhino, the centre of operations for American forces in the region at that time. Also at the base was a small contingent of American journalists, forming the modern incarnation of the nearly two-decade old National Media Pool. Pooled reporters knew there had been a serious incident involving friendly fire, but were promptly confined to a warehouse and denied all details. This was the military's "most egregious single offense" against the press in Afghanistan and marked the lowest point of an already strained relationship between the media and the military:[viii] "A gross abuse of the ground rules for the press pool," complained the *New York Times* Jill Abramson;[ix] "What's the point of having reporters over there if they can't cover the news?" wrote Sandy Johnson of the *Associated Press*.[x] This incident threatened media-military relations in Afghanistan so acutely that Assistant Secretary of Defence for Public Affairs (ASD-PA) Victoria Clarke quickly circulated a letter to National Media Pool bureau chiefs stating: "We owe you an apology. The last several days have revealed shortcomings in our preparedness to support news organizations in their efforts to cover US military operations in Afghanistan."[xi]

Despite Clarke's apology to the bureau chiefs, it was not only a lack of military preparedness, or lack of will, to facilitate media access that made reporting Afghanistan so difficult. The nature of war being waged by American and allied forces in

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[viii] Neil Hickey, "Access Denied: The Pentagon's War Reporting Rules are the Toughest Ever," *Columbia Journalism Review*, January/February 2002, (http://archives.cjr.org/year/02/1/hickey.asp)
[ix] Hickey, "Access Denied: The Pentagon's War Reporting Rules are the Toughest Ever," *Columbia Journalism Review.*
[x] David Rowan, "The Fog of the Afghan Media War," *Evening Standard*, 12 December 2001.
[xi] Michael J. Mooney, "Live From the Battlefield: An Examination of Embedded War Correspondents Reporting During Operation Iraqi Freedom (21 March – 14 April, 2003)." (MA thesis, Naval Post-Graduate School, 2004,) 51-2.

Afghanistan in 2001 was simply not conducive to media access and transparency. Many early battles in Afghanistan were conducted at night and in secrecy by US Special Forces. Bryan Whitman, Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Public Affairs, highlights this point: "In Afghanistan for weeks all we had were very small numbers of Special Forces on the ground that infiltrated into very arduous conditions and in very small numbers, which was not conducive to being able to put any significant number of reporters on the ground."[xii]

The secretive nature of Special Forces operations, combined with press complaints over access, culminated in the termination of the National Media Pool. On 27 December, ASD-PA Clarke met with National Media Pool bureau chiefs and announced the end of the pool system in Afghanistan: "We have talked to a lot of the media on the ground in Afghanistan...and pooling doesn't seem to make much sense. We are ending the pool status, and let's hear it for unilaterals in Afghanistan."[xiii] This marked the end of obligatory pooling. Reporters who wanted to be pooled were still free to do so, but it was no longer required. At that same meeting in December, Clarke and her public affairs team started dropping another word that had not been used in the context of media-military relations since the Clinton Administration in 1996: embedding.

[xii] Judith Sylvester and Suzanne Huffman, *Reporting From the Front: The Media and the Military.* (Lanham: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2005.) 44.
[xiii] United States Department of Defense (US DoD) Transcripts, "ASD PA Clarke Meeting with DoD National Media Pool Bureau Chiefs." 27 December 2001. (www.defenselink.mil)

Origins of Embedding

As previously examined, the concept behind embedding is not new. Journalists have been living and traveling with troops in wartime for a century and a half. Walter Cronkite even went so far as to parachute into Holland with US Army Airborne paratroopers in World War Two.[xiv] But it was not until a Department of Defence (DoD) news briefing in May 1996 that embedding was defined by the US military. Speaking about the ongoing North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) operations in Bosnia, ASD-PA Kenneth Bacon answered a reporter's question about access to US troops: "This deals with what's called *embedding* where a reporter goes and lives with the unit for several days or a week and then writes a story about it.[xv] Bacon's assistant, Michael Doubleday, elaborated on the concept: "With embedded media the whole idea is that the reporter becomes part of the unit."[xvi] In total, 33 reporters were embedded with 15 different American military units in Bosnia for a duration of approximately one month. This is widely recognized as the first formal, organized use of embedding in concept and in name.[xvii]

The US military next used embedding during the 1999 NATO bombing campaign to stop Slobodan Milosevic's "ethnic cleansing" campaign in the former Yugoslavia. In 2001 in Afghanistan, embedding was used yet again after ASD-PA Clarke dismantled the obligatory pool system. As noted, journalists were unhappy with the level of access

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[xiv] Sylvester and Huffman, *Reporting From the Front: The Media and the Military*, 13.
[xv] Department of Defense, "DoD News Briefing." *Transcripts*, 7 May 1996. (www.defenselink.mil)
[xvi] Brandenburg, "Journalists Embedded in Culture: War Stories as Political Strategy," 226.
[xvii] Paul and Kim, *Reporters on the Battlefield*, 48; and Brandenburg, "Journalists Embedded in Culture: War Stories as Political Strategy," 227.

they were being afforded by the military. Martin Savage, a reporter for *CNN*, was one of the most frustrated and most vocal journalists in Afghanistan at the time. He appeared on *American Morning With Paula Zhan* and blasted the Pentagon for repeatedly denying reporters access to stories like the friendly-fire casualties of December 2001. A few days later, Captain Jeff Pool, a public affairs officer, approached Savage and offered to embed him in an upcoming mission.[xviii] Pool outlined the rules Savage and seven other journalists would have to follow to be part of Operation Anaconda, where American forces went after Taliban and al-Qaeda fighters in the Shi-e-Kot valley in eastern Afghanistan. They were to be the first embedded reporters in Afghanistan. And by all accounts, the experiment was successful. "The soldiers appeared happy to have the media along and treated them just like any other soldier," wrote Pool after the mission.[xix] Jamie McIntyre, a *CNN* military affairs correspondent, gave the Pentagon "good marks for access," and Susanne Schafer of the *Associated Press* stated: "The situation improved for journalists during Anaconda."[xx]

The success of the small embedding program in Afghanistan is one reason why the Pentagon expanded the system for the invasion of Iraq.[xxi] Several other factors also contributed to the Pentagon's decision to embed reporters in Iraq. For starters, the chorus of complaints from bureau chiefs and reporters was rising. Embedding was successfully used during Operation Anaconda, and once again during Operation

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[xviii] Joan Slattery Wall, "From the Front Lines." *Ohio Today Online*, Fall 2002. (http://www.ohiou.edu/ohiotoday/fall02/features/front_line8.html)
[xix] Jeff Pool, "Taking the media inside Operation Anaconda." *Public Relations Society of America.* (http://www.prsa.org/_Publications/magazines/1002news1b.asp)
[xx] Mooney, "Live From the Battlefield: An Examination of Embedded War Correspondents Reporting During Operation Iraqi Freedom (21 March – 14 April, 2003)" 55.
[xxi] Tammy L. Miracle, "The Army and Embedded Media." *Military Review*, September /October 2003, 42.

Mountain Lion in Afghanistan. But, only a tiny fraction of reporters were involved. This led to organizations like the *International News Safety Institute* and the *Military Reporters and Editors* group to push the Pentagon for more access in future conflicts than what had been allowed in Afghanistan.[xxii]

Next, the scale and nature of Operation Iraqi Freedom, the Pentagon's mission name for the invasion of Iraq, precluded the opportunity to block reporters out. "Iraq was different for a lot of reasons," said Clarke about media access to the invasion. "It had to do with the fact that we knew if we went to war, we'd have a lot more people out there, a lot more soldiers, sailors, airmen and marines."[xxiii] In fact, in March 2003, the US had amassed an invasion force approximately 130,000 strong. The sheer size of the operation and the accompanying political debate meant interest from the news media and public was running high. Furthermore, Operation Iraqi Freedom was not a covert, Special Forces war. Rather, the large, mechanized American fighting machine was being called into action. Tanks, Bradley Fighting Vehicles, Black Hawk helicopters and swarms of ground troops formed the backbone of the invasion of Iraq. This war involved all branches of the military and was a perfect opportunity to show off military muscle.[xxiv]

Another contributing factor was the fact that news media communications and information technology had developed to the point where battlefield censorship was all

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[xxii] Paul and Kim, *Reporters on the Battlefield*, 52.
[xxiii] Victoria Clarke, "Assessing Media Coverage of the War in Iraq: Press Reports, Pentagon Rules, and Lessons for the Future." *The Brookings Institution,* Conference. (17 June, 2003: Transcripts Page 3.) (http://www.brookings.edu/comm/events/20030617.pdf)
[xxiv] Brandenburg, "Journalists Embedded in Culture: War Stories as Political Strategy," 226.

but impossible.[xxv] The most striking development was improvements in satellite technology that allowed television reporters to broadcast live from virtually anywhere in the desert. The price and weight of satellite equipment dropped while availability increased. For example, during the Persian Gulf War in 1991, the price of satellite video transmission equipment ran upwards of $100,000 and required a small truck for transportation; in 2003 the same equipment cost $20,000, fit in a briefcase and could transmit video signals for less than six dollars per minute.[xxvi] The Pentagon was facing a public and press corps that demanded better access and more information than in the first Gulf War or Afghanistan: "That determination in itself didn't much bother Defense Department officials, but it was backed up by technology that would give journalists enough freedom of movement to ensure restricting their access to the fighting would be difficult."[xxvii]

Finally, there was a recognition on the part of the Pentagon that the news media could be used to help obtain its military objectives. First, the news media could be a useful tool to simply scare many reluctant Iraqi soldiers into submission: "What better way to achieve this objective than to give Iraqis a televised view (courtesy of *ABC*) of the lines of the 3rd Infantry Division tanks stretching beyond the horizon as they crossed in Iraq?"[xxviii] Also, the military could use reporters to counter the inevitable lies coming from Baghdad. This point was frequently made by Clarke and her deputy Bryan Whitman:

[xxv] Paul and Kim, *Reporters on the Battlefield*, 52.
[xxvi] Philip Seib, *Beyond the Front Lines: How the News Media Cover a World Shaped By War*. (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2004.) 48.
[xxvii] Seib, *Beyond the Front Lines*, 51.
[xxviii] Paul and Kim, *Reporters on the Battlefield*, 54.

> Our potential adversary is a practiced liar. There's no doubt about it. He uses disinformation all the time. I can't think of a way to counter such disinformation than to have objective reporters on the battlefield covering news as it occurs.[xxix]

This was likely a lesson learned during the bombing of Kosovo in 1999. Primarily an air war, the limited embed system actually granted very little access for reporters because the Pentagon restricted what they could see. ASD-PA Kenneth Bacon noted a "sophisticated government" like that of Slobodan Milosevic would take information and reports from embedded journalists "and use it to recalibrate their defenses."[xxx] But the Pentagon's decision to limit press access ultimately backfired by driving journalists into the arms of the Yugoslav central command. The Pentagon's press restrictions were coupled with air war that was an unprecedented success: "With few or no British and American casualties to report, the western media began to concentrate on enemy casualties, especially civilian."[xxxi] Milosevic proved to be a skilled propagandist and organized tours for journalists to witness the havoc and death NATO bombs dealt Serb civilians, generating international sympathy. The Allied commander, Admiral James Ellis, noted: "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."[xxxii]

[xxix] Paul Rutherford, *Weapons of Mass Persuasion: Marketing the War Against Iraq*. (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2004.) 73.
[xxx] Paul and Kim, *Reporters on the Battlefield*, 49.
[xxxi] Philip Knightley, *The First Casualty: The War Correspondent as Hero and Myth-Maker from the Crimea to Iraq*. (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2004.) 530.
[xxxii] Paul and Kim, *Reporters on the Battlefield*, 50.

And so the Pentagon planned to use the domestic and international news media in a very different way in Iraq. Journalists would be brought into the American military and granted an inside view. Victoria Clarke, now credited as one of the chief architects of embedding in Iraq, was recruited from the international public relations giant Hill & Knowlton. Pentagon strategists like Clarke analyzed past problems between the military and the media and set out to build a partnership, rather than an adversarial relationship. The Pentagon's media policy "...expressed that new maxim of corporate marketing: be proactive, set the media agenda."[xxxiii] Joe Plenzler, a Marine public affairs officer, said reporters should be "like lampreys under a shark."[xxxiv]

Embedding Policy Developed and Implemented

On 17 March, 2003, United States President George W. Bush appeared before the world in a televised address and offered Iraqi President Saddam Hussein and his two sons, Uday and Qusay, an ultimatum: leave Iraq within 48 hours or face invasion. Hussein had flouted multiple UN resolutions and the US, after many months of debate within the UN, had built a sufficient military presence in the region to launch a strike. Forty-eight hours passed, the Iraqi dictator and his sons had not left the country, and the invasion began.

The Pentagon had been planning the embed process for months. And as in previous conflicts, the military kept the press well informed as the embedding process developed

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[xxxiii] Rutherford, *Weapons of Mass Persuasion*, 73.
[xxxiv] John Burnett, "Embedded/Unembedded II," *Columbia Journalism Review,* May/June 2003, 44.

and offered bureau chiefs a chance to provide input into the system. Between November 2002 and February 2003, bureau chiefs from major media outlets in Washington met with Clarke and her deputy Bryan Whitman three times to discuss media access. Jill Abramson of the *New York Times,* Gerald Seib of the *Wall Street Journal,* David Cook of the *Christian Science Monitor,* and Kim Hume of *Fox News* all took part in the discussions: "When I began to fashion the ground rules, I took it right to them [the bureau chiefs]," Whitman said. He continued:

> Torie [Victoria Clarke] and I held a lot of bureau chiefs meetings. We made this as transparent as we could. We recorded the sessions with the bureau chiefs, and we posted the transcripts on the website. We wanted everyone to know and be able to witness our discussions with them, to allow areas of controversy to be discussed, and at the end of the day to come up with a means to let them do what they want to do: cover the war from the front lines and to do it in a way in which our commanders in the field were going to feel comfortable that the embeds wouldn't compromise the mission or endanger any of the personnel."[xxxv]

On 10 February, 2003, the Pentagon issued a 13-page document to all US forces outlining the rules of engagement with regards to the press: "Public Affairs Guidance (PAG) on Embedding Media During Possible Future Operations/Deployments in the US Central Commands (Centcom) Area of Responsibility (AOR)." The Pentagon also sent the document to bureau chiefs who had participated in discussions with Clarke and Whitman, which was then promptly leaked to *Editor & Publisher* journal on 14 February. *Editor & Publisher* offered one of the earliest criticisms of the embed

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[xxxv] Sylvester and Huffman, *Reporting From the Front*, 42.

program, charging the Pentagon with making reporters agree to numerous "strict prohibitions" in return for access to US forces in Iraq.[xxxvi] *Editor & Publisher* obviously did not buy into the second point of the document, foreshadowing the embedding debate that would continue to present day:

> The Department of Defense (DoD) policy on media coverage of future military operations is that media will have long-term, minimally restrictive access to US air, ground and naval forces through embedding. Media coverage of any future operation will, to a large extent, shape public perception of the national security environment now and in the years ahead. This holds true for the US public; the public in allied countries whose opinion can affect the durability of our coalition; and publics in countries where we conduct operations, whose perceptions of us can affect the cost and duration of our involvement. Our ultimate strategic success in bringing peace and security to this region will come in our long-term commitment to supporting our democratic ideals. We need to tell the factual story – good or bad – before others seed the media with disinformation and distortions, as they most certainly will continue to do. Our people in the field need to tell our story – only commanders can ensure the media get to the story alongside the troops. We must organize for and facilitate access of national and international media to our forces, including those forces engaged in ground operations, with the goal of doing so right from the start. To accomplish this, we will embed media with our units. These embedded media will live, work, and travel as part of the units with which they are embedded to facilitate maximum, in-depth coverage of US Forces in combat and related operations. Commanders and public affairs officers must work together to balance the need for media access with the need for operational security.[xxxvii]

[xxxvi] Greg Mitchell, "US Military Document Outlines Coverage, Promises Wide Access, But Strict Limits." *Editor & Publisher,* 14 February 2003, 1.

[xxxvii] Department of Defense, "Public Affairs Guidance (PAG) on Embedding Media During Possible Future Operations/Deployments in the US Central Commands (Centcom) Area of Responsibility (AOR)." February 2003, 1.

This policy statement, if taken at face value, seems to symbolize a paradigmatic shift in opinion on the part of the military. The Pentagon appeared to be affirming its commitment to openness and transparency, to satisfying public opinion, and to the power of the press. The PAG document went on to list the procedures and ground rules for the embedded news media arrangement. On the surface, it appears fair and reasonable. For example, embedded reporters cannot identify battlefield casualties until notification of the next of kin; light sources like camera flashes or television lights will not be used during nighttime operations; embedded reporters will not carry firearms; and no specific information on troop strengths, formations and tactics will be released. However, the PAG document makes clear it is only to be used for "guidance" and the ground rules are simple "standards." That is, the door was left wide open for various interpretations of the rules and regulations once a reporter was embedded with an American unit. And since every embedded reporter signed the requisite "Release, Indemnification, and Hold Harmless Agreement and Agreement Not To Sue" which included a provision to follow every government direction, order and regulation, they had little recourse to complain if they did not like the embed arrangement.

Organizational Systems for Media-Military Relations

Journalistically and taken on its own, embedding is an improvement over other systems reporters and soldiers have used to organize their relationship. In the literature on war reporting, denial of access, press pools, embedded press and unilateral press are commonly identified as organizational systems.[xxxviii] Embedding is a superior organizational system for reporters and, in some circumstances, the military, than is denial of access. Embedding is also an improvement on pooling, as demonstrated by comparing the experiences of reporters in the 1991 Iraq War, and 2003 Iraq War.

Embedding Versus Denial of Access.

As outlined in Chapter One, the history of media-military relations is a history of occasional cooperation and frequent mistrust in which neither institution's interests are completely served. The post-Vietnam era in particular marks a low point in media-military relations. The invasions of the Falkland Islands, Grenada and Panama are today regarded as outright failures for media access and fall into the category of denial of access.[xxxix] During these wars the press was given extremely limited, and in the case of Grenada zero, access to the battlefield. From a military public affairs perspective, the benefits of entering the news encounter are lost. First, the military is not fulfilling its obligation to ensure the public right to know. Next, the military is wasting an opportunity to tout the good work of its soldiers, to build public support and to

[xxxviii] Paul and Kim, *Reporters on the Battlefield*, 64-68.
[xxxix] Paul and Kim, *Reporters on the Battlefield*, 65.

ultimately get bigger budgets. Third, denial of access results in long term damage to its press credibility. Last, by restricting media access the military is creating a dangerous information vacuum. Newspapers need stories to fill their pages, and broadcasters need stories to fill their nightly newscasts. If the military fails to provide them, journalists will go elsewhere and as demonstrated during the NATO bombing of Kosovo, the results can be damaging to military public relations.

When the military blocks the press from covering the front lines, obvious problems emerge for reporters. The most noticeable point is that reporters cannot do their job when they are denied access to sources and the story. But more subtly, denying access means reporters may have to rely more heavily on military sources, which can reduce them to little more than military spokespeople. Because wars are expensive, politically controversial and in most cases publicly funded, they become stories that must be reported. This puts journalists at a disadvantage: "Part of the reason denial of access is so unpopular among journalists is that it doesn't necessarily reduce the amount of coverage of the war (i.e. the amount of airtime or printed pages devoted to the issue), but alters the scope and quality of that coverage by limiting reporters to official sources only."[xl] The British government's handling of the press during the invasion of the Falkland Islands is a good example of this. When the military grants the press some access to its frontline operations, in a pooling system, embed system, or unilateral system, it is better for the individual reporters and the publics they gather news for that outright denial of access.

[xl] Paul and Kim, *Reporters on the Battlefield*, 65.

Embedding Versus Pooling

"The Department of Defense National Media Pool, a cranky child born of a loveless marriage, died after a long illness during the final quarter of 2001," wrote Mark Thompson, a Pulitzer Prize-winning *Time* writer.[xli] His unflattering characterization of pooling typifies most of the contemporary appraisals of the system. Created after the 1983 invasion of Grenada, the pool system was frequently deployed to the dissatisfaction of the media. In a military press pool, a combination of reporters from the wire services, newspapers, magazines, television and radio are given access to an operation: "However, in exchange for that access, all journalists must pool their reporting with that of other news agencies, so that no exclusives or scoops can be claimed by pool participants."[xlii] This is an immediate and obvious weakness in pool reporting as it runs contrary to the competitive, individualistic nature of the news media. While sharing reports is an inherent weakness in the general system of pooling reporters, specific problems can be found in the ground rules for individual operations. When comparing the level and method of media access to the 1991 Persian Gulf War and the 2003 invasion of Iraq, and by extension pooling and embedding, pooling emerges as a more restrictive media-military arrangement.

By far the largest exercise pooling reporters, the 1991 Gulf War saw approximately 1600 journalists in Saudi Arabia and Kuwait, 186 of whom were arranged in pools with

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[xli] Mark Thompson, "The Brief, Ineffective Life of the Pentagon's Media Pool." *Columbia Journalism Review*, March/April 2002, 66.
[xlii] Paul and Kim, *Reporters on the Battlefield*, 66.

American troops. Every pooled reporter was required by the military to sign and abide by a set of ground rules, similar to those embedded reporters would sign twelve years later. However, the pooling ground rules were significantly more restrictive than those developed for embedding, on paper and in practice. Two particular points caused the majority of problems for journalists, both of which were at least partially corrected in the embedding system. First of these was the obligatory "security review." The pooling ground rules for Operation Desert Shield, the mission to protect Saudi Arabian oil fields, and Operation Desert Storm, the invasion of Iraq, stated every story produced by a pooled reporter had to be submitted to the Joint Information Bureau in Dhahran for review. Anything the military deemed threatening to the totally subjective benchmark of operational security would be pulled. This prompted a flurry of protest from the media before the pools were even deployed. For example, a letter from the *American Society of Newspaper Editors*, dated 8 January, 1991, to ASD-PA Pete Williams stated: "First, we must strongly protest the use of a 'security review' of any type. Even though you told us that 'material will not be withheld just because it is embarrassing or contains criticism' there is no guarantee that on-site commanders will not do what was done in July, 1987, when the commodore in charge...insisted on censoring material that in no way violated news media ground rules but merely embarrassed him."[xliii]

In principle, the notion of security reviews was alarming to reporters. In reality, the military altered very few stories in any substantial way.[xliv] The real problem was much more subtle: the security review rule was coupled with a promise that the military

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[xliii] Hedrick Smith, *The Media and the Gulf War.* (Washington D.C.:Seven Locks Press, 1992.) 13.
[xliv] Michael Getler, "Do Americans Really Want to Censor War Coverage This Way?" In *The Media and the Gulf War*, ed. Hedrick Smith. (Washington, D.C.: Seven Locks Press, 1992.) 161.

would then transmit cleared stories from Dhahran, to the United States for publication: "Reporters totally lost control over their dispatches, and the military gained the extraordinary power to delay transmission of news for unspecified amounts of time."[xlv] News copy, a product with a daily expiry date, suffered: "They don't know how to transmit copy just like I don't know how to drive a tank," said Ed Cody of the *Washington Post.*[xlvi] Philip Shenon of the *New York Times* estimated it took his military minders 72 hours to transmit his stories from Iraq. This delay, coupled with a ban on pooled reporters using satellite phones that "could have given reporters direct access to their news desks" was a fundamental weakness of the pool system.[xlvii]

By contrast, the embedding guidelines that deal with security reviews are substantially more lenient, a fact supported by the experiences of embedded reporters. There was no obligatory story-review in the embed system. The PAG document and embedding contract state: "There is no general review process for media products." This statement is qualified in a later paragraph and the document makes clear that if a reporter was exposed to "sensitive information" they would be expected to voluntarily submit their story for review and remove specific bits of information. But, there was no standard review rule for embedding, as there was for pooling. The experience of embedded reporters supports the assertion that the military lived up to its commitment of non-censorship. For example, Gavin Hewitt of the *BBC* was embedded with the US 3rd Infantry Division and did not have a minder or have to submit any of his stories for

[xlv] Getler, "Do Americans Really Want to Censor War Coverage This Way?" 161.
[xlvi] Getler, "Do Americans Really Want to Censor War Coverage This Way?" 162.
[xlvii] Getler, "Do Americans Really Want to Censor War Coverage This Way?" 162.

review.[xlviii] The *BBC*'s Head of Newsgathering, Adrian Van Klaveren, said the military "maintained a light touch" on all his reporters, free of censorship.[xlix] *Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly* conducted a survey of embedded journalists and found most had a positive perception of the program, with one of the main benefits being access without censorship.[l]

The PAG document also eases previous restrictions on the use of transmission equipment: "No communication equipment for use by media in the conduct of their duties will be specifically prohibited." Reporters were free to take advantage of the latest technology and report live from the desert. In the end the military banned one brand of satellite telephone called Thuraya. The Pentagon was concerned the Iraqi military could hone in on the Thuraya's transmission signal and better target US troops.[li] Aside from this, the US military did not ban any transmission equipment used by embedded journalists.

The second major problem in the pool system, corrected in the embed system, was the military's heavy-handed use of public affairs escorts to chaperone journalists while on Saudi Arabian and US military bases. This "most controversial requirement" was very

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[xlviii] Quoted in Howard Tumber and Jerry Palmer, *Media at War: The Iraq Crisis*. (London: Sage Publications Ltd. 2004.) 50.
[xlix] *BBC News Online*, "How 'Embedded' Reporters are handling the war." (http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/uk_news/2885179.stm)
[l] Shahira Fahmy and Thomas J. Johnson, "'How We Performed': Embedded Journalists' Attitudes and Perceptions Towards Covering the Iraq War," *Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly*, 82:2 (Summer 2005) 301-317.
[li] Sylvester and Huffman, *Reporting From the Front*, 59.

restrictive to reporters and limited their freedom of movement and access to soldiers.[lii] Escorts frequently interjected during interviews, sometimes got reporters lost in transit between bases, and in one case, "attempt[ed] to intimidate soldiers being interviewed by holding out a turned on tape recorder behind the reporter."[liii]

Like the issue of security reviews, public affairs escorts were dealt with under the embedding rules. While an escort may be assigned, "The absence of a PA (public affairs) escort is not a reason to preclude media access to operations." Instead, the military adopted a policy of "security at the source," or in military-speak, "only speak to your pay grade." Soldiers were instructed to only answer questions if they had direct, factual knowledge about the subject and to never speculate about strategy or comment on rumors. This is a clear departure from escorts and the "don't talk to reporters" attitude previously adopted by the military.[liv]

Since the American military brought down Saddam Hussein's regime, researchers and think-tanks have dissected the news media's performance covering the war. Comparing television coverage by the major US networks of the 1991 and 2003 Iraq wars was the subject of one such study, published in *Media Monitor* by the Centre for Media and Public Affairs. After examining all war coverage from four major television news networks, *ABC*, *NBC*, *CBS* and *Fox News*, during the first 26 days of combat, the weight of evidence suggests the viewing public was better served by coverage that

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[lii] David Benjamin, "Censorship in the Gulf." (Auburn University). http://web1.duc.auburn.edu/~benjadp/gulf/gulf.html
[liii] Benjamin, "Censorship in the Gulf." (Auburn University).
[liv] Paul and Kim, *Reporters on the Battlefield*, 70.

included embedding: "There was more war to see the second time in Iraq, as the embedding program increased the volume of war-related images on the evening newscasts."[lv] One of the main criticisms of coverage in 1991 is that the media produced a sterilized image of war. In 2003, thirty-five per cent of stories contained combat footage, compared with twenty per cent in 1991; there were also six times as many visuals of civilian casualties, and six times as many visuals of American and British casualties; finally, media coverage in 2003 was substantially less supportive of the military than it had been in 1991, despite widespread unhappiness with the pool system in the first Gulf War.[lvi]

Two other frequently cited studies also appraise the embedding system: "Embedded Reporters: What Are Americans Getting?" conducted by the *Project For Excellence in Journalism (PEJ)*, and "Too Close for Comfort? The Role of Embedded Reporting During the 2003 Iraq War" by the Cardiff University School of Journalism, Media and Cultural Studies, commissioned by the *British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC).* The *PEJ* study examined television coverage over three days at the outset of Operation Iraqi Freedom. It examined *ABC, CBS, CNN, NBC*, and *Fox News* and concluded embedded reports were less interpretive than other forms of reporting and primarily, to the tune of ninety-four per cent, factual in nature. It also concluded much embedding reporting lacked context and forty-seven per cent simply described battles or the results,

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[lv] S. Robert Lichter et al, "The Media Go to War: TV News Coverage of the War in Iraq," *Media Monitor*, Vol. xvii, no.2 (July/August 2003), 8.
[lvi] Lichter et al., "The Media Go to War," 8.

supporting the argument that embedding shifted emphasis from larger contextual questions to play-by-play commentary.[lvii]

In "Too Close for Comfort?" Cardiff University researchers conducted extensive interviews with key actors in the media and the military, content analysis of television coverage, and focus group interviews with members of the public. They found embedded reporters to be "demonstrably able" to protect their objectivity and did not become excessively close to their sources: "Indeed, our evidence suggests that the embeds provided a much more balanced account of events than some non-embedded reporters – especially studio based anchors, whose scripts appeared, on some issues, to tilt towards certain pro-war assumptions."[lviii] For example, studio anchors were seven times as likely to present the Iraqi people in celebration of the US and allied militaries than embedded reporters. Embedding also gave journalists an alternative to military press briefings, a dominant factor in coverage of the 1991 Gulf War. By shifting emphasis from the press room to the battlefield, journalists were afforded, "a higher degree of independent scrutiny than would have been possible if journalists were largely dependent on prepared military briefings."[lix] For example, embedded reporters were far less likely to repeat government claims about the presence of weapons of mass destruction (WMD) in Iraq. Justin Lewis, the head researcher of the Cardiff report,

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[lvii] Tom Rosenstiel, et al., "Embedded Reporters: What Are Americans Getting?" *Project for Excellence in Journalism,* (April 2003) 1-16.
[lviii] Justin Lewis et al, "Too Close for Comfort? The Role of Embedded Reporting During the 2003 Iraq War: Summary Report." *Cardiff University School of Journalism, Media, and Cultural Studies*, 4.
[lix] Lewis et al. "Too Close for Comfort?" 5.

found in a separate study that correspondents at press briefings in Qatar were more likely to imply the presence of WMD than were embedded reporters.[lx]

Compared to previous media-military organizational systems, embedding is better for reporters and the viewing public than granting no access, or pooling reporters. The notion of journalists traveling with troops and documenting the war from the front lines was likely unthinkable to British reporters who were totally locked out of the invasion of the Falkland Islands, or American reporters who spent the invasion of Grenada on Barbados. The Pentagon's official line is that embedding was a success because it effectively countered Iraqi lies, highlighted the good work of American soldiers and educated a generation of journalists about the military.[lxi] The American mission was very rarely jeopardized by embedded reporters' stories and only a small handful were removed from the program for violating operational security.[lxii]

Despite the fact the embedding system addressed some of the key weaknesses in the pool system, media coverage of the American-led invasion of Iraq still suffered. This is for two main reasons: despite its strengths, the embed system still had some inherent and insurmountable challenges for journalists. Second, the Pentagon deemed the embed system to be the only system of access to the story. Numerous post-mortems of the embed system, and anecdotal stories from participants, indicate the military believed they had fairly dealt with the press through embedding and that other reporters had no

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[lx] Justin Lewis and Rod Brookes, "How British Television News Represented the Case for the War in Iraq," in *Reporting War: Journalism in Wartime*, eds. Stuart Allen and Barbie Zelizer, (London: Routledge, 2004) 294.
[lxi] Tumber and Palmer, *Media at War*, 58.
[lxii] Paul and Kim, *Reporters on the Battlefield*, 56.

place on the battlefield. The military's treatment of unilateral journalists is a major criticism of the press experience in Iraq. This most important point, coupled with the strict limitations on independent transportation for embedded reporters, and the tiny fraction of embedded reporters who actually witnessed anything newsworthy, resulted in news coverage that was oftentimes devoid of multiple perspectives and context.

Devil's in the Details: Public Affairs Guidance on Embedding

One of the most widely cited criticisms of embedded reporting in Iraq is that it provided only a tiny fragment of information on the overall story. General Richard Myers, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, called this element of embedding, "the soda-straw view of war." Donald Rumsfeld, Secretary of Defense, called the fragments "slices." By its very nature, embedded reporting sacrifices breadth for depth. Journalists acquire a deep and detailed knowledge of the war experience from the perspective of an American soldier. They see what it looks like when a missile is launched, but have no idea what it looks like when it lands. "Somebody's got to take a step back and give a little perspective," complained Tom Bettag, executive producer of *Nightline*.[lxiii] "It almost seemed to me a tour, a tourist visit, going past the natives in a vehicle," said Araminta Wordsworth, deputy foreign editor at the *National Post*. "I think it gets you there at least, and it gets you to report on the ground, but if that is in any way very valuable I don't know. It can't be put in context very well."[lxiv]

[lxiii] Cited in Rosenstiel et al., "Embedded Reporters: What Are Americans Getting?" 11.
[lxiv] Interviewed on 19 January 2006.

The missing context was a problem with embedded reporting. *Editor and Publisher* journal identified 15 major stories, most or all of which involved embedded reporters, that were either factually incorrect, or "misreported a sliver of fact into a major event."[lxv] For example, reporters claimed on March 22 that Iraqi soldiers were surrendering on masse; the next day, a division of 8,000 Iraqis purportedly surrendered to allied forces in Basra; also in Basra on March 24, scores of hostile, anti-Saddam citizens launch an uprising. These stories were taken out of context and were at least partially incorrect. The remedy to this fundamental weakness in the embedding system is to balance embedded reports with other types of reports that can provide context: "Indeed, both broadcasters and the public are in emphatic agreement that a multiplicity of sources and perspectives is essential for objective and balanced war coverage."[lxvi]

Media organizations knew going into the invasion of Iraq that balance and "multiplicity of sources" was key. For example, *CNN* embedded just 19 of their 45 correspondents covering the war: "We needed to get as many straws out there as we could to get as full a picture as we could of the conflict," said Eason Jordan, *CNN*'s chief news executive.[lxvii] In Canada, the *CBC* was so skeptical of embedding that English-language news decided not to embed at all: "Our view...is that there are many aspects to this war, not only the American military dimension," said Tony Burman, editor-in-chief of *CBC* English news.[lxviii] It is interesting to note that the heart of *CBC's* decision to not embed reporters lay more with logistical concerns rather than a principled

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[lxv] Cited in Rosenstiel et al., "Embedded Reporters: What Are Americans Getting?" 11.
[lxvi] Lewis et al., "Too Close for Comfort?" 5.
[lxvii] Sylvester and Huffman, *Reporting From the Front*, 63.
[lxviii] Paul Workman, "Embed with the Army: The US allows journalists to live with front-line troops." *CBC, The National.* 7 April 2003.

opposition to the idea of embedding. "It was a wide ranging decision," said Peter Mansbridge, chief correspondent for CBC-TV news. "One the one hand, when you are a foreign nation embedding with the Americans, we were pretty sure we would be fairly low down on the list of priorities as to where they would send us. What we didn't want to do was to tie up a crew in some place that was nowhere near anything. There were some people who were embedded and never left Texas. We couldn't have afforded to do that."[lxix] Mansbridge says ideally the *CBC* would have had embedded and unilateral reporters in Iraq.

Unfortunately for those who sought multiple perspectives, the American military seemed to make a conscious and calculated decision to obstruct media organizations' attempts to balance embedded reports with other types of reports by keeping unilateral journalists out of the picture. Embedded reporters, tightly contained in their units, were welcomed. Correspondents at press briefings were also welcomed. But unilateral journalists were obstructed, harassed, detained, and killed.

Unilateral Journalists

The portion of the PAG document that deals with unilateral journalists states: "Having embedded media does not preclude contact with other media. Embedded media, as a result of time invested with the unit and ground rules agreement, may have a different level of access." Given the experience of unilateral journalists in Iraq, "a different level

[lxix] Interviewed on 14 February 2006.

of access" is an understatement. For some of the 1,800 unilaterals, no access was allowed at all. A good example is the experience of CBC TV reporter Paul Workman. Workman was based in Kuwait as a unilateral journalist. He and producer Ian Kalushner were almost "blocked out entirely," he said. "We were afforded none of the facilities or resources or trips or occasions to speak to soldiers that were given to embedded journalists."[lxx] Workman did manage to get into southern Iraq three times, but only by sneaking through breaches in the separation barriers between Iraq and Kuwait. An American public affairs officer told Kalushner, "I don't give a damn about the unilateral journalists. We've fulfilled our obligation to the media and if you don't like it, you can go home."[lxxi] CBC Radio reporter Margaret Evans is another example. Unlike Workman, who claimed he was actively blocked out of the battlefield, Evans said in the rare instances when she came into contact with American soldiers, they simply ignored her. While trying to follow a convoy of American tanks into Kirkuk in northern Iraq, soldiers "wouldn't talk to us at all," she said. "They said they didn't think it would be fair because they had one embedded journalist with them, and said it wouldn't be fair to him to talk to me."[lxxii]

Many post-war analyses of media coverage in Iraq cite treatment of unilaterals as a serious problem. Cardiff University's study "Too Close for Comfort" cites sources who argue the US military "deliberately hindered" unilateral journalists, making their job more difficult and more dangerous. Mark Austin, a unilateral reporter with *ITV* News argued: "They were not happy at all about having journalists on the battlefield that they

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[lxx] Interviewed on 2 February 2006.
[lxxi] Paul Workman, "Embedded journalists versus 'unilateral' reporters" *CBC News Online*, 7 April, 2003.
[lxxii] Interviewed on 21 January 2006.

did not control and they made that very clear."[lxxiii] Howard Tumber and Jerry Palmer agree and state the ability of unilaterals to report the war was hampered by "obstructions from the military and concerns over safety."[lxxiv] The International *Federation of Journalists* documented numerous complaints of violations against unilateral reporters at the hands of American and coalition soldiers including detainment, harassment, and deportation.[lxxv] Despite the PAG document, the presence of embeds did seem to preclude military contact with other journalists.

Predictably, the Pentagon has never said restricted unilateral reporting was the *quid pro quo* for embedding. The Pentagon only said Iraq was extremely dangerous, that they could not guarantee the safety of unilaterals, and they did not want to have to rescue those who got themselves in trouble. Speaking to reporters about safety, Bryan Whitman said:

> We've talked about this with you before but I don't think we can emphasize it enough. The battlefield's a dangerous place and it's going to be a dangerous place even embedded with our forces. It will be a more dangerous place, though, for reporters that are out there not in an embedded status, that are moving around the battlefield, as I call it, running to the sound of guns.[lxxvi]

But the majority of evidence indicates an unwritten clause in the embedding program was that unilateral journalists were going to have a rough ride. John Donvan of *ABC*

[lxxiii] Lewis et al., "Too Close for Comfort," 22.
[lxxiv] Tumber and Palmer, *Media at War*, 33.
[lxxv] Tumber and Palmer, *Media at War*, 37.
[lxxvi] Quoted in Tumber and Palmer, *Media at War*, 40.

News employed a tactic similar to that of Paul Workman and snuck into Iraq through holes in the Kuwait/Iraq separation barrier:

> Good plan. Except that when we returned to the hole in the fence to re-enter Iraq the next day, it had been closed. We drove to the border crossing, hoping to talk our way past the Kuwaiti and American soldiers serving as border guards. Instead we found a long line of our fellow unilaterals who were being told by coalition soldiers that Iraq was closed to them. Embeds only, their orders said.[lxxvii]

The *Committee to Protect Journalists* studied the experience of unilateral reporters in Iraq and came to the conclusion "that the Pentagon was determined to deter western correspondents from reporting any war from the 'enemy side.'"[lxxviii] John Simpson of the *BBC*, who was himself wounded in a friendly fire incident, believes embedding some journalists meant the rest became targets.[lxxix] Phillip Knightley agrees and raises the possibility that casualties amongst reporters were not totally frowned upon by the Pentagon: "I am convinced that in the light of all the evidence, the Pentagon is determined there will be no more reporting from the enemy side, and a few deaths among the correspondents who do will deter others."[lxxx] Knightley refers to the two most famous incidents of US forces allegedly targeting journalists. The first was when unilateral *ITV* reporter Terry Lloyd was shot and killed by US marines, and the second involved the friendly fire deaths of three more journalists at the Palestine Hotel in Baghdad.

[lxxvii] John Donvan, "For the unilaterals, no neutral ground." *Columbia Journalism Review*. 42, 1 (May/June 2003).
[lxxviii] Phillip Knightley, "Turning the tanks on the reporters." *The Observer*. 15 June 2003.
[lxxix] Tumber and Palmer, *Media at War*, 37.
[lxxx] Phillip Knightley, "Turning the tanks on the reporters." *The Observer*. 15 June 2003.

During the first, formal phase of the war, 17 reporters and their staff died or were killed, the majority at the hands of the US military while reporting as unilaterals.[lxxxi] The obstructions, injuries and deaths dealt to unilateral reporters led the *International Federation of Journalists* to blast the Pentagon's media policy in Iraq: "The impulse to monitor, control, and manipulate the information process had led to a casual disregard of journalists' rights to work safely and to report independently."[lxxxii] Knightley sums it up as such: "I believe that the US administration, in keeping with its new foreign policy, has an attitude to war correspondents that reflects the now somewhat infamous statement made by President Bush when declaring war on terrorists: 'You're either with us or you're against us.'"[lxxxiii] And given the experience of unilateral reporters, choosing to report independently put them squarely in the latter category.

Transportation and Inaction

Preventing unilateral journalists from adding their "slice" to the overall mosaic of news coverage was a problem. Denied that vantage, news consumers received a narrower and less contextualized view of the war. Two other frequently criticized factors that contributed to fragmentary news coverage was the rule regarding independent transportation, and the small percentage of journalists who actually saw combat while embedded. Both points were dealt with in the PAG document. The rules state: "Embedded media are not authorized use of their own vehicles while traveling in an

[lxxxi] Knightley, *The First Casualty*, 537.
[lxxxii] Tumber and Palmer, *Media at War*, 36.
[lxxxiii] Knightley, *The First Casualty*, 537.

embedded status," and "Commanders will ensure the media are provided with every opportunity to observe actual combat operations." In the case of witnessing combat, the military failed to provide what was promised. In the case of transportation, the military succeeded in implementing this rule. Both resulted in less perspective on the war.

"The single most common criticism I heard from my embedded colleagues during the war was the lack of mobility," wrote *National Public Radio* correspondent John Burnett in the *Columbia Journalism Review*. "Without our own transportation or translators, embedded reporters lived exclusively within the reality of the US military...The inability to verify the military's version of the war made for one-sided reporting."[lxxxiv] Denied the freedom of movement, embedded reporters were totally dependent on their military hosts and could only report what was in their immediate surroundings. This denied embedded reporters the ability to independently check the military's claims and highlights the point that information can be influenced and controlled without direct censorship: "Indeed, public relations strategies in the Pentagon are partly based on the recognition that influencing coverage involved controlling the context in which journalists report, rather than more direct forms of interference."[lxxxv] Restricting journalists' freedom of movement did just that and removed one more potential view of the war.

[lxxxiv] Burnett, "Embedded/Unembedded II," 43.
[lxxxv] Lewis et al., "Too Close for Comfort?" 11.

Finally, of the nearly 800 journalists who were embedded with US forces in Iraq, only 50 to 70 actually saw combat.[lxxxvi] All embedded reporters had to abide by the embedding agreement, including forfeiting the right to independent transportation, even if they were hundreds of kilometres from the war and got no significant stories. Reporters were free to permanently terminate their embed status at any time, but would then have to venture out as a unilateral with all the associated risks and difficulties. Geoffrey York of *The Globe and Mail* echoed Mansbridge's concern and said his paper declined their embed slot: "It began to hit home to me when my editors learned that the embedded spot the *Globe* was being offered was in Texas. We turned down the invitation to join the 1st Cavalry in Fort Hood, a unit that was not assured to participate in the Iraq war except perhaps as a post war peace-keeper."[lxxxvii] The vast majority of embedded journalists were inserted in a unit and then kept far from the action. This resulted in hundreds of journalists, who had signed away their freedom of movement rights, having nothing to see. Coupled with the mistreatment of unilaterals, Iraq was a tightly controlled story.

Conclusion

The first phase of the American-led invasion of Iraq started on 20 March, 2003 and ended less than six weeks later when President Bush declared the end of combat aboard the USS Abraham Lincoln, under a "Mission Accomplished" banner. Given the on-going insurgency, bloodshed, and instability in Iraq, the mission can hardly be

[lxxxvi] Rutherford, *Weapons of Mass Persuasion*, 77.
[lxxxvii] Cited in Tumber and Palmer, *Media at War*, 33.

considered over. But during that time, American forces steadily advanced across the desert, capturing key cities on the way. The final prize, central Baghdad, was taken on April 9, triggering looting and chaos in the capital. Saddam Hussein's palaces were occupied, and the northern cities of Kirkuk and Mosul were taken soon after.

The American invasion of Iraq was an offensive, dynamic operation and reporters who covered the US forces were subject to strict limitations. Unilateral reporters were obstructed, harassed and many left Iraq as wartime casualties. Embedded reporters had to sign away their right to independent transportation, and the majority never witnessed heavy combat. The Pentagon's media policy during Operation Iraqi Freedom was extremely limiting for journalists covering that war. As a system for organizing the media-military relationship, embedding is an improvement over denial of access, and the pool system. But, embedding was also the military's excuse to block out unilateral journalists.

Three months after President Bush's "mission accomplished" declaration, the Canadian Forces would implement their own embedding program as part of their operation in Afghanistan. The nature of the Canadian Forces' mission in Afghanistan was very different than that of the American military in Iraq. The result was a less restrictive embedding system that let journalists see and report more.

Chapter Four

Static Embedding – Afghanistan 2003-2005

The sixtieth anniversary of the groundbreaking ceremony that marked the beginning of construction on what would become the Pentagon was commemorated by a different kind of ground breaking. On 11 September, 1941, workers started constructing the five sided building which would house the Department of War. Hundreds of thousands of tonnes of sand and gravel were dredged from the neighbouring Potomac River and mixed into cement to erect the Pentagon's walls. Exactly sixty years later, American Airlines flight 77 came crashing down on one of those five walls, killing 125 Pentagon employees, all passengers and crew aboard the plane, and reducing part of the structure to dust. That attack, coupled with the spectacular collapsing of the World Trade Centre towers by two more hijacked jetliners and a fourth plane crashing into a field in Pennsylvania, set in motion a chain of events that would see the Canadian Forces (CF) engaged in one of just a few offensive missions since the Korean War.

Then Prime Minister Jean Chrétien called the terrorism of 11 September, 2001 (9/11), an act of war not just against the United States (US), but against all North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) countries, Canada included. Chrétien's Foreign Affairs Minister John Manley said Canada would support a "proportional response by the United States to what happened in New York and Washington on Tuesday."[i] True to his word, approximately three months later Canadian Special Forces were on the ground in Afghanistan supporting the American mission to wipe out terrorist training camps and capture al-Qaeda's leaders. The Canadian role in Afghanistan would gradually

[i] Jeff Sallot, "Canada backs 'proportionate' attack" *The Globe and Mail*, 14 September 2001, A3.

expand and evolve as the country's Taliban rulers were killed and scattered by the American-assembled coalition.

The Department of National Defence and Canadian Forces (DND/CF) adopted a new policy, embedding, to deal with the news media while working in Afghanistan. Perhaps not surprising being that the continental neighbours were allies in Afghanistan, the public affairs wing of Canada's military adopted the rules and policies drafted by the American military and used them to grant access to Canadian reporters that would be coming to the coalition base. Over the next two years those rules evolved from something of an ad hoc embedding arrangement, to a formalized and funded policy which saw Canadian reporters embedded with units at the CF Afghanistan base, called Camp Julien. While the impetus for the DND/CF embedding programme came from the US military, and conceptually it was similar, in practice the CF treatment of reporters in Afghanistan was significantly different from the American treatment of reporters in Iraq. Specifically, the CF was more lenient with unilateral reporters, transportation rules, and in allowing reporters to temporarily end their embedded status to cover non-military events. These improvements opened the door for the Canadian news media to collectively provide more contextualized reporting in Afghanistan than had been possible for journalists in Iraq. The DND/CF acknowledge there were no grand philosophical differences in opinion towards the news media in Canada and the US: "We were more flexible with less rigid rules not because we are good guys, but because the context allowed for it," said Major Roland Lavoie, one of three CF public

affairs officers at Camp Julien.[ii] That context, being relatively static and having a base to embed reporters, afforded the military greater opportunity to ease restrictions on journalists. The CF example shows that in static operations, embedding will allow journalists to see more and report more freely than in dynamic, forward moving operations like those conducted by US forces in Iraq. Operating an embedding program from a base rather than the battlefield also benefits the military in its public affairs objectives.

Background to Canadian Forces Involvement in Afghanistan

In the years immediately following the end of the Second World War, Korea became a microcosm of the larger clash of ideologies that shaped the world during the Cold War years. Partitioned after 1945, North Korea became a Soviet-supported communist state, and the South became strongly anti-Communist with US support. On 25 June, 1950, war broke out along the 38th parallel and the North Korean military began pushing south towards Seoul. The United Nations (UN), facing its first open act of aggression since its creation, immediately called on North Korea to withdraw and when it did not, appealed to UN member states to support South Korea in repelling Northern forces. On June 30, US President Harry Truman committed American troops. Canada, its military reduced to peace-time levels, was initially hard-pressed to commit a land force of any size or strength and instead sent three destroyers from the Canadian Navy. The

[ii] Interviewed on 26 November, 2004.

government then assembled the 25th Canadian Infantry Brigade, a fighting force that suffered its first battlefield casualties in Korea on 22 February, 1951.[iii]

After the Korean War ended in 1953 the CF were involved in few if any missions that fell outside of the bounds of peacekeeping for the next 40 years. This was the era when Lester B. Pearson argued an UN-sponsored military force comprised of soldiers from non-combatant countries could act as a buffer between Egypt and her allies, and Israel and hers, and let some steam out of the impending conflict over the Suez Canal. Pearson went on to win the Nobel Peace Prize and Canada's reputation as a nation of peacekeepers began. Canada's role in backing the UN resolution demanding Iraq withdraw from Kuwait in 1990 was perhaps the first major departure from peacekeeping since the Korean War. Sending soldiers to join the US-led coalition in Afghanistan in the next decade was an even greater departure from Canada's peacekeeping role.

The CF involvement in Afghanistan did not come suddenly. Following the terrorism of 9/11, Canada, like most US allies, immediately condemned the attacks and offered what political and military support it could. Prime Minister Chrétien put several CF units on standby, but when the first US and British cruise missiles struck key communication and transportation targets in Afghanistan on 7 October, 2001, the CF had no presence in Afghanistan. It was not until early December that the first Canadian soldiers landed in

[iii] Government of Canada, Veterans Affairs Canada, "Canadian in Korea: Valour Remembered." (http://www.vac-acc.gc.ca/general/sub.cfm?source=history/KoreaWar/valour)

Afghanistan, in the form of six Joint Task Force 2 (JTF-2) explosives specialists.[iv] By December 20, Canadian Special Forces had sent 40 more soldiers to join their US, British, Australian and German counterparts in hunting the Taliban and al-Qaeda leadership in Afghanistan. Regular CF troops first landed in southern Afghanistan on 2 February, 2002 with a mandate to provide security around the Kandahar airport, supervise prisoners and support humanitarian efforts. Operation Apollo, Canada's contribution to the post-9/11 "war on terrorism" was in full swing.

The CF commitment of hundreds of regular soldiers, Special Forces soldiers, surveillance aircraft, war ships and other equipment from Canada's depleted hardware stocks generated a massive amount of media and public interest in late 2001 and early 2002. Canadian news organizations were making arrangement to send correspondents to the coalition base near the Kandahar airport. The CF, however, had no useable public affairs plan to deal with Canadian news reporters and to capitalize on the increased attention: "We were a unit in a larger American task force at the airfield in Kandahar," said Mike Audette, a CF public affairs officer based in Ottawa. "The Americans already had an American program that they were going to put in place so we dovetailed into theirs. We worked in the same press information centre as the Americans. They had their own media embedded program and media embedded instructions that we used to clear Canadian media who wanted to stay at the camp in Kandahar."[v] Audette said that experience was the first taste the CF had with embedding

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[iv] David Pugliese, "Commando unit raised to 40 in Afghanistan: JTF-2 in Kandahar area" *National Post*, 20 December 2001, A12.

[v] Interviewed on 26 November, 2004.

and was the impetus for the more formalized embedding program used later at Camp Julien.

Journalistically, it was a rough start. While Audette said embedding in Kandahar "met our purposes" at least one reporter found the embed arrangement did not meet his and was escorted off the base for violating the rules. Mitch Potter, now the Middle East bureau chief for the *Toronto Star*, filed a feature report for his paper on 10 February, 2002 under the headline 'Kandahar, inside and out.' Potter listed the number of coalition troops on the base - 3,900 - detailed the arrangement and number of guard towers around the holding pen for Taliban and al-Qaeda prisoners - eight - and listed some of the countries that had contributed Special Forces troops to the mission. "'It looks like the Special Forces Olympics,'" Potter quotes a Canadian soldier as saying. Potter was escorted off the base two days later for violating the agreed-to and signed rules and regulations to not disclose any of the details which he did. "He broke the rules and he's very aware of what the rules are. I don't know why he's done this," said Major Jamie Robertson, a military spokesman.[vi] Potter says the CF was selectively meting out punishment and in reality was simply retaliating to his criticism over the inept and restrictive treatment of journalists on the base at that time. "The level of frustration amongst the journalists who were having this embed experience was extremely high," said Potter. "We were basically there to do stories on what kind of toothpaste the troops were using. I exposed what a sham it was that we had invested all

[vi] Cited in Bruce Cheadle, "Military boots Canadian reporters off Kandahar airbase for revealing details," *Canadian Press*, 12 February 2002.

this money and got nothing."[vii] Potter would be the first and only reporter the CF removed from their embed program at that time.

Despite this setback, the CF were sufficiently impressed with embedding during Operation Apollo to take the American concept, procedures and rules back to Ottawa and adapt them to fit Canadian laws and military circumstances. The next major CF deployment was Operation Athena, a stabilization and reconstruction mission to Afghanistan starting in August, 2003. The CF would be operating primarily out of a base, Camp Julien, on the outskirts of the Afghan capital Kabul. This static location offered a different embedding dynamic than had been available in Iraq and presented benefits for the media and the military.

Recent Media-Military Relations in Canada

The CF relationship with the press and public image suffered in the decade between the Persian Gulf War and the invasion and stabilization of Afghanistan starting in 2001. In 1991, the CF was clearly interested in projecting a strong, combat-capable image to gather and maintain public and political support and earn larger budgets. The CF communications plan for Operation Friction, the name given to all CF operations in the Persian Gulf, states: "As many human interest stories as possible will be supported in order to reinforce the 'boy next door' sentiments of the public so that they become

[vii] Interviewed on 15 January, 2006.

personally involved and provide public support for our sailors and aircrew."[viii] An Operation Friction After-Action report continues in the same vein:

> Although there are indications that Canada, as happened after the First and Second World Wars, is quickly forgetting the value of its Armed Forces, it is clearly too soon to judge. But it is not too soon to begin working on entrenching in the hearts and minds of Canadians, particularly politicians, the value in having a competent, properly equipped military on call at all times. But, more than ever, it seems the CF must be rationalized in terms that Canadians (and politicians) can relate to.[ix]

By some accounts, the CF failed miserably in its public relations goals in 1990-1991. "The top brass at that time were basically incompetent at dealing with the media," said Stephen Ward, a journalism professor at the University of British Columbia who covered Operation Friction as a reporter. "They were paranoid about reporters and unable to get out even 'good news' stories."[x]

Media-military relations only worsened in the next few years. A 25 May, 1998 *Maclean's* magazine report summed up the litany of "scandals" that had enveloped Canada's military. The article highlights the torture and murder of a 16-year old Somali teenager at the hands of Canadian Airborne Regiment soldiers in 1993, Airborne's brutal hazing of new soldiers in 1995, the Defence Department's altering of documents

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[viii] Department of National Defence (DND), Access to Information Act (ATIA) Request # A-2003-00394/ 3-4, "Phase A – Pre-Deployment," 107.
[ix] DND, ATIP Request # A-2003-00394 / 3-4, "Gulf After-Action Report, Conclusion: Public Environment," 38.
[x] Quoted in Chris Wattie, "Embedded in Ontario as military hones media skills: Canadian Forces eager to go on display - - 'warts and all'" *National Post*, 12 July 2003, A21.

coming before the Somalia Inquiry in 1996, and the low pay and squalid living conditions for CF members in 1997.[xi] That "Scandal Log" published in the May 25 *Maclean's* was only a supplementary piece to the cover story called "Rape in the military" which, together with the June 1 cover story, detailed the alleged systematic sexual assaults and misogyny in the CF.

These scandals capped off a very rough ride for the CF in the 1990s and before. Between 1993 and 1998, successive Liberal governments cut military spending and full-time personnel by one fifth. Canada's former Major-General Lewis Mackenzie estimated defence cuts between 1993 and 2003 fell somewhere in the range of twenty to twenty-nine billion dollars.[xii] CF regular forces numbers dropped to 60,600 in 1999, from 126,000 in 1962.[xiii] The Canadian public's knowledge of and appreciation for its military seemingly also declined, a trend decried in military circles. Writing in the *Canadian Military Journal* in 2002, Lieutenant-Colonel Michael Goodspeed argues Canadians have no knowledge of the military: "Sadly, such appalling ignorance is an unflattering national characteristic; and while it may not be representative of every segment of Canadian society, it underscores a pervasive lack of awareness and understanding Canadian have about their military."[xiv] Professor Donna Winslow, writing in the same publication agrees: "The decline in 'knowledgeability' about military affairs in the civilian community – both opinion-formers and the general public – has been borne out in recent research. Direct experience and appreciation of military

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[xi] Jane O'Hara et al., "Rape in the military" *Maclean's* Vol.111, 21 (25 May 1998) 14.
[xii] *The Globe and Mail*, editorial, "Money for the military," 23 October 2003, A22.
[xiii] Donna Winslow, "Canadian society and its army," *Canadian Military Journal* (Winter 2003-2004) 23.
[xiv] Lt.-Col. Michael Goodspeed, "Identifying ourselves in the information age," *Canadian Military Journal* (Winter 2002-2003) 47.

has declined markedly over the past 20 years, both in the political elite and well as in broader sections of the population."[xv]

But the trend towards shrinking military budgets and public presence seems to be on the turnaround. In June 2005, the CF announced a massive overhaul of its command structure with emphasis on responding to domestic crises and terror. The 2005 Liberal budget promised almost thirteen billion dollars in defence investments over the next five years. The Conservative Party, currently in office, is an enthusiastic supporter of the Canadian military. Media interest in CF missions is also running high: "Suffice it to say that we are swamped by interest from the media in our deployment to Afghanistan," said Colonel Brett Boudreau, director of public affairs planning for the CF. Boudreau describes the 1990's as "the bad days" for CF public relations: "Media-military relations were at their nadir. I don't think it could have gotten much worse." Boudreau says embedding is representative of a new, proactive CF approach that makes public relations a priority.[xvi] Donna Winslow agrees that embedding is an effective method to publicize the CF: "The use of 'embedded' journalists in the current operation in Afghanistan has done a lot to sensitize Canadians to the challenges of the mission. This is an excellent beginning in nourishing a long-term relationship with the Canadian public."[xvii] Chris Wattie, a *National Post* reporter who was embedded with the CF at Camp Julien and most recently in Kandahar, simply states: "I think the military has realized being shy and retiring has gotten them nothing but budget cuts."[xviii]

[xv] Winslow, "Canadian society and its army," 18.
[xvi] Quoted in Wattie, "Embedded in Ontario as military hones media skills," A21.
[xvii] Winslow, "Canadian society and its army," 23.
[xviii] Interviewed on 13 January 2006

Embedding, as documented by numerous military analyses, succeeded in drawing deep and prolonged attention to its mission in Afghanistan.

Static Embedding for the Canadian Military: Operation Athena, August 2003 – January 2004

In the broadest official terms, DND/CF public affairs policy strives to "ensure that Canadians are well-informed and aware of the role, mandate, operations and contributions of the CF and DND."[xix] The military acts on behalf of the citizens who elect its political masters and provide its funding. The military has an obligation to openness, with reasonable limits on things like privacy and operational security. But the military also has a desire for openness to achieve its non-combat goals of funding and recruits: "On the one hand we have an obligation to be open and transparent. On the other hand we have a wish to communicate and be open and transparent," says Major Roland Lavoie. Lavoie says the CF must show, rather than tell, Canadians the importance of their military. "The idea is that if we inform people what we are doing, they will see that there is a value in what we are doing and therefore we will get the recruits and the money. We are not deploying saying we want more cash, so we demonstrate."[xx]

Embedding journalists is an effective way to do that. Afghanistan, by most accounts, is a difficult country to report from as there is little news media infrastructure. For

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[xix] Department of National Defence, "Public Affairs Policy," (http://www.admfincs.forces.gc.ca/admfincs/subjects/daod/2008/0_e.asp)
[xx] Interviewed on 26 November 2004.

example, telephone and internet systems are spotty and unreliable, making communication and story transmission difficult; transportation to and around the capital Kabul is difficult; a significant time difference separates Afghanistan and Canada; and safety is an on-going concern. Lavoie says the CF therefore had to "open a window" between Afghanistan and Canada by creating a system to make lengthy reporting easier: "If we didn't embed, we would see reporters every few months for two days. Embedding was a way to optimize the openness of that pipe between Canadians and the theatre."[xxi] And the numbers speak to the success of embedding in this respect: during the first rotation of CF troops in Operation Athena, from August 2003 to January 2004, there were 21 separate embeddings for periods ranging from seven to eighty-one days.[xxii] *Canadian Press* had somebody continuously embedded, and *Canwest* was nearly as diligent. "Most important advantage from embedding?" queries an e-mail from a navy public affairs officer to Captain Darren Steele, a facilitator of the embed program in Ottawa. "I think it is the sheer volume of reporting. We are talking literally thousands of articles by this time."[xxiii]

An important consideration for CF public affairs officers at Camp Julien was the idea of operational security. The CF define it as such: "Operational security refers to the principle of safeguarding the integrity of a military operation or activity, and/or the safety of CF members and other personnel involved in the military operation or

[xxi] Interviewed on 26 November, 2004.
[xxii] DND, ATIA Request # A-2004-00540, "Media Embedding Log (as of 24 January 2004.)" 205.
[xxiii] DND, ATIA Request # A-2004-00540, E-mail correspondence, 17 May 2004, between Lt. Petra Smith and Cpt. Darren Steel.

activity."[xxiv] Understandably, operational security will always trump journalistic freedom. This is made clear in CF military doctrine:

> The safety of CF personnel and the integrity of military operations constitute fundamental principles, underlying everything the CF does on behalf of Canadians. For this reason, the principles of openness and transparency should be balanced against the principle of operational security during CF operations. In respecting the principle of operational security, no PA [public affairs] activity should undermine the safety of personnel involved in a CF operation; or the likely success of a CF operation or activity.[xxv]

It is inside the overall framework of the military's mission that the public affairs elements fall. Therefore the military's communications objectives are secondary to its military objectives. The embedding program was shaped to work within the overall framework of the mission.

The nature of CF operations in Afghanistan that started in August 2003 and ended in October 2005 were well-suited to exploit the advantages of having embedded reporters while protecting operational security. According to the DND, Operation Athena was a mission to "reconstruct" and "stabilize" Afghanistan. The CF was part of the larger NATO-run International Security and Assistance Force (ISAF) with a mandate to provide security and assistance to Afghanistan in and around the capital. For the military, and the news media, this meant being based out of the CF compound, Camp

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[xxiv] Department of National Defence/Canadian Forces, "Public affairs, military doctrine and Canadian Forces operations, " *Defence Administrative Orders and Directives, 2008-4.* (http://www.admfincs.forces.gc.ca/admfincs/subjects/daod/2008/4_e.asp)

[xxv] DND/CF, "Operating Principles; Public affairs, military doctrine and Canadian Forces operations," *Defence Administrative Orders and Directives, 2008-4.* (http://www.admfincs.forces.gc.ca/admfincs/subjects/daod/2008/4_e.asp)

Julien. The majority of CF operations during this time, including armed patrols of Kabul, started and ended each day at Camp Julien. The CF soldiers were essentially static in Afghanistan, unlike the American forces in Iraq, resulting in a different embedding experience for the media and the military. Major Rita LePage of the CF was the NATO Public Information Director in Kabul:

> It had to be very different because the Iraq experience, when they embedded for the offensive program, these journalists were on the move during the offensive and were part of the team. Whereas with Camp Julien in Afghanistan, it is a static base so the journalists go out on patrols come back at night to the base where everybody sleeps. It's not like they are moving through the countryside, moving on to Baghdad for the final assault. It is very different and it changes everything towards access to information and security.[xxvi]

For LePage, and public affairs officers Lavoie and Audette, the key circumstantial difference between the US and Canadian missions, and by extension the embedding programs, is that US forces were in a "constant state of maneuver," whereas the CF were not. For almost the entire first six weeks of the invasion of Iraq, US forces were moving forward and therefore put rigid restrictions on reporters to protect the mission. The CF put similar restrictions on reporters during CF maneuvers, that is on day patrols, which were then lifted when the patrol returned to Camp Julien. Canada's more permissive embedding program was therefore in large part due to the fact CF were only maneuvering one day at a time, not for six steady weeks. Because reporters are privy to sensitive operational details while on patrol, they must submit to restrictions on

[xxvi] Interviewed on 26 November, 2004.

publishing some information while a mission is ongoing: "During the operation we tell the media you don't take your cell phone and say, 'We are going at that point, we are three vehicles with so many soldiers and so many guns,' because somebody will catch that signal and target us," said Lavoie. "Basically we are saying during an operation there must be silence. You can take your quotes, take your film, and then you come back to the camp once the operation is finished, and most of the time what has been seen or said can be reported."[xxvii]

An appraisal of the CF embed system called "Embedded Media Relations on Operation Athena," authored by Major Jay Janzen, one of the three public affairs officers at Camp Julien in August, 2003, lists some of the advantages for the military of embedding in a static, "peace support" mission, as opposed to a dynamic, offensive mission:

> The *American* concept of embedding and the resulting ground rules were specifically tailored for wartime operations. *In the Iraq War*, media representatives were assigned to specific subunits for the duration of the conflict. These units did not remain in fixed locations for extended periods of time, rather they moved rapidly as the coalition advanced towards *Baghdad* and other strategic objectives. Journalists slept, ate and traveled with members of the same unit for several months. Once the initial registration and accreditation period was over, media correspondents had almost no contact with public affairs officers or senior commanders. They were administered and briefed by platoon or company commanders in the field with limited public affairs experience. As a result, there were few opportunities to brief or influence the media from the strategic level and few checks and balances other than the stringent ground rules established prior to deployment. During Operation Athena however, all journalists

[xxvii] Interviewed on 26 November 2004.

> were centrally located at Camp Julien and had separate living quarters from the troops. Media members had almost daily contact with public affairs officers and regular contact with senior commanders. As a result, journalists were within arms length for virtually the entire operation.*[xxviii]

At the core of Janzen's report is "Daily contact with public affairs officers" in Afghanistan, versus "Minimal contact with public affairs officers" in Iraq, resulting in "Many opportunities to influence media" versus "Few opportunities to influence media." The author of Canada's embedding policy, Donald Roy, is reluctant to admit the military pushes CF-friendly stories, "On operations you don't try to push information. You don't need to and the media will take it as an affront."[xxix] But Janzen's report, and the "Public Affairs After Action Report" for Operation Athena, suggests otherwise. Aside from daily contact with public affairs officers, the CF managed to influence journalists' coverage by integrating senior officers into the public relations process. Senior officers immediately met arriving embedded journalists, often gave interviews on the spot, and quickly established a rapport: "This immediately set reporters at ease and laid the foundations for a professional relationship."[xxx] Senior officers also had informal meetings with reporters during meal breaks, passing along information that would sometimes turn into a story: "By pushing information to the media, the Battalion was also able to exercise some influence over what journalists

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* Italicized portions of this quote were left blank when the original document was released under the *Access to Information Act*, pursuant to third-party disclosure regulations, section 20(1), of the *Act*. However, the author of the document, Major J.H. Janzen, confirmed the italicized portions on 20 February 2006.

[xxviii] Major Jay Janzen, "Embedded Media Relations on Operation Athena, 3 January 2004." DND, ATIA Request # A-2004-00540, 62-73.

[xxix] Interviewed on 26 November, 2004.

[xxx] DND, ATIA Request # A-2004-00540, "Op Athena – Public Affairs After Action Report, 26 January 2004." 161-175.

decided to cover. When an opportunity to cover a mission or event was proactively presented to a reporter, it almost always received coverage."[xxxi]

Integral to the CF evaluation of success in Afghanistan was not just to be valuable to the overall ISAF mission, but to be seen to be valuable. Indeed, one of the public affairs goals during Operation Athena was to counter skepticism about Canada's intentions in Afghanistan and capabilities of its armed forces. A January, 2004 After Action report states: "The public affairs [PA] mission was to inform the Canadian public of the OP ATHENA mission and instill public confidence in the ability of the CF to contribute to the ISAF mission in Kabul." And from the military's perspective, this was achieved: "Thanks to the media-embedding program, the CF contribution to ISAF was profiled almost daily in Canadian media."[xxxii] Of all those news reports, only a very small number contained anything that jeopardized operational security and none considered serious enough to result in a disembedding.

Static embedding for the Canadian News Media

The CF had a favorable impression of embedding during Operation Athena: "Overall, the embedded media program was a resounding success," writes Janzen in the "Lessons Learned" portion of his report. However, there were still some problems, mainly logistical and in the early stages of the embedding program. From the military side, they identified a lack of preparation in providing accommodation, workspace, medical

[xxxi] Janzen, "Embedded Media Relations on Operation Athena, 3 January 2004" 65.
[xxxii] DND, ATIA, "Op Athena – Public Affairs After Action Report, 26 January 2004," 161-162.

and financial services.[xxxiii] These problems were quickly ironed out but did contribute to an early failure to actually embed journalists who arrived from Canada as part of the program. Chris Wattie of the *National Post* said the military delayed embedding him and five other reporters for two weeks because they were not ready: "We basically told the public affairs officers either you embed us tomorrow or we are all pulling out. We gave him an ultimatum. So we all showed up at the gates at the crack of dawn the next day with all our bags and basically dared them to throw us out, and in a mad scramble they finally got us in."[xxxiv] But from both the media and military perspectives, problems with embedding were primarily logistical, not conceptual.

As noted in the previous chapter, one of the overarching problems with reporting in Iraq was an absence of context in embedded reporters' stories: "Riding around in a tank is fun, but you don't know shit about what's going on," said *ABC* Pentagon Correspondent John McWethy of the American embedding program.[xxxv] One of the CF forces public relations goals in Afghanistan, however, was to provide context about what the Canadian military was doing in Afghanistan and how it fit into the larger ISAF mission. Achieving this was one of the big victories for static, peace-support embedding, as opposed to dynamic, offensive embedding: "Media has greater awareness of big picture" in Afghanistan, writes Major Janzen in his report, versus "Media has less awareness of big picture" in Iraq.[xxxvi] For Canadian reporters in Afghanistan, this translated into a loosening of some of the most contentious restrictions on their

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[xxxiii] DND, ATIA Request # A-2004-00540, "Task Force Kabul Roto 0 Staff Action Directive," 416.
[xxxiv] Interviewed on 13 January 2006.
[xxxv] Cited in Rosenstiel et al., "Embedded Reporters: What Are Americans Getting?" 11.
[xxxvi] Janzen, "Embedded Media Relations on Operation Athena, 3 January 2004" 64.

embedded counterparts in Iraq. Specifically, rules on independent transportation were eased, treatment for unilateral journalists was improved, and embedded journalists were allowed to terminate and reactivate their embedded status to cover events that did not involve the Canadian Forces.

On the surface, it appeared the transportation situation for embedded reporters in Afghanistan would be like that in Iraq. Point 34 of the CF embedding instructions state: "Embedded media will have access to military transportation on a no cost, space availability basis for intra-theatre movement. Media members will not be allowed to use their own vehicles while embedded."[xxxvii] However, this point was quickly amended in the "theatre-specific" instructions after a change in ISAF regulations meant the CF did not have enough vehicles to transport troops and reporters while on patrol:

> Another serious issue was transportation for PAOs [public affairs officers] and the media. Shortly after the start of ISAF operations, a new vehicle rule was enforced and required a minimum of two vehicles with two armed soldiers in each for all soft-skinned vehicles. This created an immediate shortage of vehicles and drivers across the contingent and it became extremely difficult to secure transportation and drivers. This impacted the abilities of the PAOs to attend meetings, liaise with other camps and contingents, pick up embedded media at the airport, and escort media outside camps.
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> During post-embedding debriefs, several media mentioned similar concerns about transportation. On numerous occasions media had to hire local drivers to accompany patrols. This situation was certainly embarrassing. It

[xxxvii] DND/CF, ADM(PA)/J5PA Instruction 0301 "Embedding media with CF formations/units," (12 November 2003) 8.

> also raised concerns about security, because local drivers with no accreditation or security clearances were often made aware of patrol routes and were given advance notice of patrol timings.[xxxviii]

Admittedly, roadside bombs and improvised explosives targeting coalition military patrols was a bigger problem in Iraqi cities like Baghdad, than Kabul. But, given the overall volatile nature of Afghanistan, providing local Afghans with advance notice of patrol routes and timings seems a dangerous breach of security.

Embedded reporters were also allowed to use their own drivers and fixers to leave Camp Julien and cover non-CF stories. Major Roland Lavoie said the CF drew a line at Camp Julien being used as a "hotel," but did allow reporters to temporarily disembed to cover major non-CF stories: "We realized it made no sense for Canadian media to go there at that expense and for a long period without being able to cover other key stories that gave context, like the elections," said Lavoie. "How could you cover our presence there without covering the adoption of the constitution and the process leading to the elections because, of course, we are supporting and creating the security conditions that allowed it to proceed? The idea is that they are reporting us and the context."[xxxix] Reporters embedded with the CFs support Lavoie's assertion. "We agreed to the limitations that were placed upon us but quite frankly we never felt restricted there," said Peter Mansbridge of the *CBC*. Mansbridge was embedded with the crew of *The National* in February 2004. "I went off and on the base, on my own, a number of times and was not given any hassle on that front." Chris Wattie said he left base once or

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[xxxviii] DND, ATIA, "Op Athena – Public Affairs After Action Report, 26 January 2004," 165.
[xxxix] Interviewed on 26 November, 2004.

twice a week during his nearly two month embedding: "I would call my driver and he would pick me up at the camp. The public affairs officers said that's fine as long as it is only now and then because we don't want to be a hotel," said Wattie. "They were pretty flexible and I was actually a little surprised at that."[xl] Being static afforded the CF the leeway to do this. Had embedded journalists in Iraq been allowed to utilize private transportation and temporarily disembed, it is likely they would not have been able to re-embed as their unit would have moved.

Treatment of unilateral journalists is the final area of noticeable improvement in the CF media policy in Afghanistan, over American policy in Iraq. In Iraq, reporters complained the military used embedding as a pretext to shut other types of reporting out. In Afghanistan, the CF personnel were significantly more accommodating to unilateral journalists. That is not to say they received equal treatment. Major Janzen acknowledges it was logistically more difficult to give unilaterals the same level of access because they had to make the trip to Camp Julien from downtown Kabul, and staff may not be readily available to receive them and set up interviews. Also, embeds had dedicated themselves to covering the CF, giving them a justified advantage in covering military stories: "Since these folks made the commitment to come to us, we should reciprocate in some way."[xli]

[xl] Interviewed on 13 January 2006.
[xli] Interviewed on 20 February 2006.

As of 22 July, 2004, only four media organizations opted to cover Operation Athena unilaterally: *CBC Radio, The Globe & Mail, Le Devoir* and *SRC-TV.*[xlii] Major Lavoie said public affairs officers often expended more effort to facilitate access for unilaterals because they represented different media organizations than the embeds and often, different publics: "French Radio Canada," said Lavoie. "I want to get them information because it will reach a different audience. My aim is to optimize the level of information exposure to our mission so I would do my utmost. I would say they had more efforts made for them to give them access." And anecdotally, unilateral reporters agree they were treated fairly. Bill Gillespie of *CBC Radio* was one: "They treated me very fairly and equally. If I suffered any shortfalls, and you can't expect to have exactly the same access in the sense that if something happens, there is chance to go out on an armored vehicle tomorrow, if you are not on the base, you can't expect to know that. But whenever I made a request, they were really good about filling them as fast as they could."[xliii] Hamida Ghafour, a freelance reporter for *The Globe & Mail*, also agrees: "They were supportive. It was very easy to ring up the press officer. 'Yes' they would say, 'we will try to arrange it as quick as we can.' In general they were very good in making sure you got to do the stories about the Canadian mission."[xliv] Having a static, central base made it logistically easier for the CF to accommodate unilateral reporters. While they were not afforded exactly the same level of access as embeds, unilaterals in Afghanistan report an easier time than those in Iraq.

[xlii] DND, ATIA # A-2004-00540, "Op Athena Roto 1 – Public Affairs After Action Report," 22 July 2004, 491.
[xliii] Interviewed on 23 January 2006.
[xliv] Interviewed on 22 February 2006.

Conclusion

The embed experience for Canadian reporters in Afghanistan was significantly different than the experience of those who covered Iraq. While both the Canadian and American embedding programs were conceived in the days immediately following the coalition ouster of the Taliban regime, and conceptually Canada's program closely mirrored that of the US, in practice they were different. Rather than reflecting any ideological difference in opinion between the two militaries, Canada's less restrictive program was due to a difference in mission. Being based at Camp Julien let the military influence news reports by putting journalists in daily contact with public affairs officers, and more importantly, senior officers. As noted in the military's analysis of public affairs operations in the early stages of Operation Athena, building a friendly, professional relationship with the press often resulted in the military subtly pushing story ideas on reporters. The press experience in Afghanistan was also better as the CF allowed reporters to temporarily disembed to cover non-CF stories, eased transportation restrictions, and allowed unilateral journalists more access. These measures helped add more slices of the story in Afghanistan and provided more context about the CF mission in Afghanistan.

Conclusion

On 18 October, 2005, the final rotation of Canadian Forces (CF) soldiers withdrew from Camp Julien on the outskirts of the Afghan capital of Kabul. Operation Athena, as Canada's mission to Afghanistan at that time was called, ended. Five rotations of Canadian soldiers had come and gone, helping provide security and humanitarian assistance to Afghanistan after the American-led invasion in late 2001. Six weeks later the CF moved the last of their equipment out of Camp Julien and handed the deserted base over to the Afghan Ministry of Defence. Operation Athena was over, but the Canadian military's mission in Afghanistan was now entering a new stage. While the troops from the final rotation of Operation Athena were heading home, the soldiers comprising the first rotation of Operation Archer were traveling in the opposite direction, back to Afghanistan. This time, the CF would be based in one of the southernmost provinces of Afghanistan called Kandahar.

The Kandahar province has a reputation for being rough, inhospitable and dangerous. After the bombardment of the country in 2001, remnants of the Taliban are said to have scattered, many into the mountainous region around Kandahar that forms the Afghan-Pakistan border: "These are not exactly *Lonely Planet* destinations. Rough and wild, isolated and outright hostile to outsiders, this is truly Afghanistan's untamed frontier – untamed, and unchanged, for centuries."[i] The villages in the Kandahar province are believed to be filled with Taliban fighters, their sympathizers, and "hired guns" from Pakistan. They want to destabilize the region and, more importantly, Afghan president

[i] Adnan R. Khan. "Prepare to bury your dead." *Maclean's,* 119, 12 (20 March 2006) 16.

Hamid Karzai's government in Kabul.[ii] Attacks on foreign soldiers and Afghan security forces are frequent.

This is the context in which about 2,300 CF soldiers and support personnel find themselves in early 2006. In Operation Archer, Canada's latest contribution to the "war on terror," Canadian soldiers are heading up the multi-national effort to stabilize Afghanistan's volatile south. Media interest in Operation Archer, as in Operation Athena, is running high. On 15 January, 2006, a suicide bomber killed Canadian diplomat Glyn Berry near Kandahar City. On March 4, an Afghan youth wielding an axe attacked CF soldier Trevor Greene during a meeting with village elders. The violence is well-documented by embedded reporters. Chris Wattie of the *National Post* again embedded with the CF during the opening weeks of Operation Archer. Peter Mansbridge and the crew of *CBC's The National* took their show to Afghanistan once more. Even Mitch Potter, the *Toronto Star* reporter kicked off the Kandahar base in 2002, has again embedded with the CF.

That reporters would once more embed with the CF speaks to the success of the program from a journalistic perspective. The fact that Operation Archer is so far shaping up to be a more dangerous mission than Operation Athena may make embedding more attractive yet. The Canadian military was also sufficiently impressed with the embedding system to use it again. Even before Operation Archer, the military applied the embedding guidelines to other CF missions: "I was on HMCS Toronto when I went down to cover Hurricane Katrina. I was also with the DART when they were in

[ii] Khan, "Prepare to bury your dead," 17-19.

Sri Lanka in Tsunami land," said Chris Wattie. "They assigned the same [embedding] rules. It was funny, when they handed us the rules the navy guys had scratched out Kabul and ISAF and written in HMCS Toronto. It was a direct photocopy of the same rules."[iii]

But, embedding was a success in Afghanistan during Operation Athena for circumstantial reasons. As noted, being based at Camp Julien afforded the military the leeway to ease restrictions on reporters. The Canadian embedding program was more permissive for journalists than the American program not because of ideological differences, but because of circumstance. The American mission in Iraq was a dynamic, forward-moving operation and its embedding program reflected this. The Canadian mission in Afghanistan in 2003 was a static, peace-support operation and its embedding program was also reflective of this. Reporters should expect an embedding experience reflective of the host military's mission. If the CF should ever engage in an offensive, dynamic operation with an embedding component, reporters should expect restrictions akin to those imposed by the American military in Iraq.

Militaries may also be wary of using embedding as a blanket policy for granting access to their operations. There are obvious limits to the usefulness of embedding from the military perspective, and in some circumstances it could be damaging to strategic and public affairs goals. For example, missions that do not have a prominent land-force component may not make for good use of embedding. There is only so much a reporter could see from the deck of an aircraft carrier. Alternatively, embedding reporters with

[iii] Personal interview, 13 January 2006.

special forces units runs the risk of jeopardizing the military mission. But more subtly, to maximize the benefit of having an embedded reporter and constant publicity pipeline home, the military should be very confident in the conduct of its soldiers and its chances of military success. A United States (US) Marines "lessons learned" report highlights this point. While offering guarded praise of the embedding program during the 2003 invasion of Iraq, the Marines also raise a red flag. While embedding highlighted the good work of the US military in victory, it also would have highlighted its failure in defeat:

> What would have been the headlines if the coalition lost a battalion of infantrymen in a chemical attack? What if there was a more nationalistic spirit in the hearts of the people of Iraq and a majority of the population fought us block by block? Before we as a collective military society congratulate ourselves on the 'overwhelming success' of the embed program, we need to pause and remember that we were both good and lucky.[iv]

A good example of the Marines' fears being realized is the incident involving the shooting death of a wounded and unarmed Iraqi man on the floor of a Fallujah mosque in November, 2004. At that time, the city of Fallujah was said to house the core of the insurgency in Iraq. Kevin Sites, a freelance journalist on assignment for *NBC,* was embedded with a Marines unit. They entered a mosque that was the night before the scene of a gunfight and discovered dead, and at least one living, Iraqi fighters on the floor. Sites described the event on his blog: "The lieutenant asks them, 'Are there people inside?' One of the Marines raised his hand and signals five. 'Did you shoot

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[iv] Cited in Christopher Cooper. "Marines raise a caution flag over embed system." *Wall Street Journal.* 16 December 2003.

them?' the lieutenant asks. 'Roger that, sir.' Then I hear him say this about one of the men: 'He's fucking faking he's dead – He's fucking faking he's dead.' He pulls the trigger. There is a small splatter against the back wall and the man's leg slump down. 'Well, he's dead now,' says another Marine in the background."[v]

Footage of the shooting was shown repeatedly in the following weeks, polarizing opinion about embedded reporters. Some people in the Pentagon felt betrayed and said Sites' tape was misleading and fueled the insurgency.[vi] The day before, they argue, a Marine from the same unit had been killed while handling the body of an insurgent strapped with explosives. But others say the tape simply captured the reality of battle and that it was Sites' duty as an embedded reporter to release it.[vii] Regardless, in this example the presence of an embedded reporter put a dent in the reputation of the Marines. If US casualties had been more numerous, or incidents like this more frequent, embedded journalists could have become a detriment rather than an asset to the Pentagon's public affairs objectives.

On the whole, the military appears to more enthusiastically support the idea of embedding than do the news media. Asked what he thought of embedding, US Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld simply replied: "I think of it as a home-run ball. I wish I'd thought of it."[viii] Militaries carefully analyze their operations and experiences, draft reports and lesson plans, and pass along collective knowledge from

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[v] Kevin Sites, "Open letter to the Devil Dogs of the 3.1." *Kevin Sites Blog*. 21 November 2004. (http://www.kevinsites.net/2004_11_21_archive.html#110107420331292115)
[vi] Douglas MacKinnon, "The deadly price of embedding." *New York Post Online,* 19 November 2004.
[vii] Darrin Mortenson, "Blaming the messenger." *NCTimes.com*. 21 November 2004.
[viii] Cooper, "Marines assess embedded media." *Wall Street Journal*, 16 December 2003.

one war to the next. Reporters, on the other hand, do not engage in the same level of self-reflection. While it is true some individuals publish editorials and journal articles about the wartime experience, the news media as a whole does not engage in the same systematic performance evaluation that the military does. History informs the present more acutely in the ranks of military men than in the ranks of reporters. To ensure the weaknesses in the embedding system are corrected for the next war, news reporters need to study their own experiences carefully and relentlessly push for more access and freedom of movement on the battlefield. Embedding is the latest system of access, but it will not be the last.

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