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TRAINING FOR MILITARY REPORTING

By

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ABSTRACT

TRAINING FOR MILITARY REPORTING

By

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Critics of defense reporting claim too few journalists are knowledgeable about the military forces they cover. Surveys were mailed to journalists at 189 organizations with 39 reporters responding about their backgrounds, what types of military stories they cover most and what topics are the most important to teach to new defense journalists. Most were not veterans. Twenty-nine non-veterans were offered little or no preparatory training before they were expected to cover assignments. Surprisingly, military veterans showed a higher reliance on official sources than non-veterans, possibly because they assimilated military's values during their service. Most respondents agreed that some type of preparation would helpful to reduce confusion while learning the beat. Recommendations are offered to encourage editors to improve existing training and various types of regional opportunities similar to methods used by the Council for the Advancement of Science Writing to improve coverage by their members.

Dedication

To the men and women of the military and the press who each serve the needs of freedom loving people in their own way.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This paper was made possible through the support of a great many faculty and colleagues at the School of Journalism. Certainly, my committee chairman, Dr. Stephen Lacy, and the committee members Dr. William Cote´ and Prof. Jim Detjen, gave a great deal of advice and guidance in the pursuit of this research. I was also guided by the research of MSU alumnus William E. Small (MA, 1964) whose thesis on the training of science writers gave me many ideas on how to pursue my own work. There was also a great deal of support from other faculty members who provided my training in research methods, those who inspired me with their own research and the many others who simply lent encouragement when it was needed.

I also received considerable help from the public affairs offices of the U.S. Marine Corps, the U.S. Army, the U.S. Navy, the U.S. Air Force, U.S. Atlantic Command, U.S. Pacific Command and from Marine Lieut. Col. Patrick Sivigny of the Office of the Assistant to the Secretary of Defense for Public Affairs. Their assistance in identifying journalists who regularly cover military activities helped provide for a more experienced sample population.

Finally, my family and friends also gave their love and encouragement to help sustain me through the effort. None of this would be possible without the support of all of those named above who will have my eternal gratitude.

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Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

Since the earliest days of American history, journalism has been regarded as one of the bulwarks of our government. One of the key principles embodied in the U.S. Constitution is that all power comes from the consent of the people.[1] American political theorists have furthered reasoned that citizens need to know about their government's actions to exercise their will.[2] Such reasoning is why Thomas Jefferson believed that a country with newspapers was preferable to one without them. Without such a watchful eye, Jefferson was certain elected officials would abuse their authority, becoming like "wolves."[3]

More recently, researchers assessing the state of journalism education in 1984 said "that journalism and mass communications are central to the functioning of contemporary society and that providing an understanding of journalism and mass communication must be central to the mission of the university."[4]

Because the media has such an important position as the government's watch dog,[5] and the importance of military's role as an executor of that government's policy,[6] journalists must be able to comprehend and accurately report upon the operations of the armed forces to their audiences if readers and viewers are to accurately assess the

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[1]U.S. Term Limits, Inc., et al., v Ray Thornton et al. Winston Bryant, Attorney General of Arkansas v. Bobbie E. Hill et al. 514 U.S. 842 (1995).
[2]Kent R. Middleton and Bill F. Chamberlin, The Law of Public Communication, 2 ed. (White Plains, N.Y.: Longman Publishing, 1991), 485.
[3]Thomas Jefferson, "A Noble Experiment," in Interpretations of Journalism, ed. Frank Luther Mott and Ralph D. Casey (New York: R.S. Crofts & Co., 1937), 52-53.
[4]Planning for Curricular Change: A Report of the project on the Future of Journalism and Mass Communication Education, 2d ed.(Eugene, Ore.: School of Journalism, University of Oregon; 1987), 1.
[5]Saul Padover, Thomas Jefferson on Democracy (New York: New American Library, 1939), 92 -93.
[6]Raymond Aron, Clausewitz: Philosopher of War (London: Rowledge & Kegan Paul, 1983), 104-105 and Associated Press, "Clinton rallies against Iraq," Grand Rapids Press (Mich.), 16 Nov. 1997, sec. A, p. 1.

actions of their government.

There has been on-going discussion between military officials and journalists since 1984 when a study of Operation Urgent Fury in Grenada recommended training for journalists covering the military. However, little progress seems to have been made toward a mutually agreeable method.[7] Since that study, a Center for Defense Journalism was established at Boston University in 1988, but criticism of Gulf War reporting errors by the center's own director indicates that the facility may not have had enough time or usage to make a substantial impact on the quality of military coverage.[8]

Therefore, this study asks those who have spent time reporting on military operations to recommend the areas of specialized training that might best prepare new colleagues to join them on the beat. It was hoped that the findings would yield a scientifically based training regimen that would help these new initiates more accurately describe military activities with less reliance on official sources for information and story ideas. Data was gathered for this study by mailing survey questionnaires to 189 journalists who regularly cover the Pentagon, major unified command headquarters (those that command operations conducted by more than one of the armed services within a geographic area of responsibility) and those areas of the continental United States that have the highest concentration of military forces.

The map shown in Figure 1 helps demonstrate where some of these major military centers are located.

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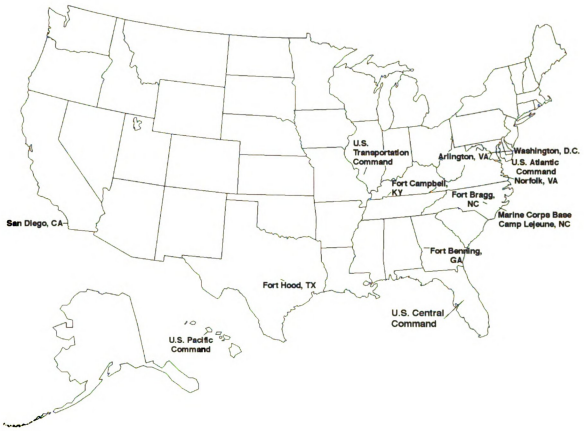
[7]Winnant Sidle, "Report by CJCS Media-Military Panel (Sidle Panel)" (1985) and Frank A. Aukofer and William P. Lawrence, America's Team : The Odd Couple : A Report on the Relationship Between the Media and the Military (Nashville, Tenn.: The Freedom Forum First Amendment Center, 1995), 43-45.
[8]H. Joachim Maitre, "Journalistic Incompetence" Neiman Reports (Summer 1991): 12-13.

Figure 1

Unified Commands and Major Military Operating Centers Contacted for Names



The frequent exposure of these journalists to military stories was believed to make them excellent sources to identify the obstacles in becoming a capable military reporter. Melissa Healy of the *Los Angeles Times* has described the defense beat as the most complex of any in American journalism, exposing reporters to a distinct culture with its own language, laws and customs.[9] The beat covers more than 1,100 Department of Defense facilities across the United States and overseas[10] relying on a wide range of

[9]Melissa Healy, "Covering the Pentagon for a Major Newspaper: A Reporter's perspective," in Defense Beat : the Dilemmas of Defense Coverage, ed. Loren B. Thompson (New York : Lexington Books, 1991), 95

[10]William R. Evinger, Directory of U.S. Military Bases Worldwide (Phoenix, Ariz.: Oryx Press, 1995), vii.

media from small town community newspapers and broadcast outlets to reporters from major metropolitan markets, newspaper chains and networks. Such a variance in the size of the markets and news organizations covering the military means that not all journalists assigned to cover the military are likely to have the eight years of experience found in the average beat reporter.[11]

Many assigned to cover the beat will likely report a lack of previous experience with the military because of the overall decline in Americans serving in the armed forces since the introduction of the all-volunteer force in 1972. (See Appendix A, Fig. 2) The overall number of living veterans has decreased 27 percent between 1980 and 1993.[12] But even before such declines, previous experience has shown that veterans with the necessary writing skills have never been available in sufficient numbers to ensure the availability of a cadre of reporters trained in military science.[13] Meanwhile, advances in computers and communications have continued to yield increasingly sophisticated weaponry, making the coverage of the forces that use them even more challenging.

Therefore, it would seem only logical that journalists lacking previous military experience be offered training that will help them to understand what they will be observing. New journalists on some beats can often rely on classes in government, science and the arts to help them understand what they will see while covering stories in these areas. But few journalists are likely to have studied military science unless they have participated in a Reserve Officer Training Course during their undergraduate studies.

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[11]David H Weaver and G. Cleveland Wilhoit, The American Journalist : A Portrait of U.S. News People and their Work (Bloomington, Ind.: Indiana University Press, 1986), 70.
[12]Statistical abstract: August 1989/September 1995 (Washington D.C.: Office of Planning, Research and Statistics, Resolution Trust Corporation, 1995), 364.
[13]Joseph J. Mathews, Reporting the Wars (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, 1957), 241-242.

Without some type of military experience or preparatory training, there will be many subtleties about covering the military that the journalist new to the beat may not grasp. For example, besides its role as a military force, the Department of Defense has been the nation's biggest employer, as well as the largest hirer of minorities and women. It is also a multi-billion dollar business enterprise; the nation's second largest health care insurer and provider; the world's largest educational enterprise; the nation's largest day care provider and a major supporter of research.[14] The military's need for good order and discipline often makes its enforcement of military statutes seem harsh and unreasonable to the casual observer. Many reporters may find it difficult to understand the military mindset concerning homosexuals in the military or regulations against adultery that appear out of date with how the rest of America feels on these issues.

Operations in Somalia, Haiti, Bosnia and assisting disaster victims of Hurricane Andrew and Mississippi River flooding have demonstrated the government's wide flexibility in using military forces for peacekeeping, disaster relief and humanitarian operations. But such uses have also brought questions about the readiness costs in using armed forces for such nontraditional roles. The coverage of a tragic shooting by Marines involved in counterdrug operations along the U.S.-Mexican border also posed difficult questions about whether military forces should be used at all in such a law enforcement role.[15]

Without previous experience or specialized training it would be easy for journalists covering such issues to be too dependent on the official sources or those critical of the operation. In fact, Reese and Buckalew found that the lack of military

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[14]Edwin Dorn, "10 Ways to Look at the Department of Defense." Defense Issues, Vol. 10, No. 36 (Washington, DC: Department of Defense DoD, 1995), 1-2.
[15]Peter Katel, "Navy may settle with slain goat herder's family," USA Today 3 Apr. 1998, sec. A, p. 8.

expertise among the television reporters assigned to cover local developments in the Houston market during the Persian Gulf War led to thin and unbalanced reporting.[16]

Therefore, it is hoped that the findings of this research will offer educators and media managers the information needed to design and test training methods that will make it easier for those reporting on military operations to comprehend what they observe and to submit stories that are accurate and readily understood by their audience.

[16]Stephen D. Reese and Bob Buckalew, "The Militarism of Local Television: The Routine Framing of the Persian Gulf War," Critical Studies in Mass Communication 12 (1994), 45.

Chapter 2

FRAMEWORK

This chapter provides some of the common sense rationales used to design this study. Such a study of training for specialized reporting seems to fit best under the theoretical framework that studies the effects of the individual on the creation of mass media content. This framework supposes that the personal background and experiences of the communications professional are believed to be intrinsic factors that influence the content of the news. Therefore, it seems reasonable to assume that a journalist's education may influence the stories he or she pursues and what sources they use to gather information.[17]

Given the overall decline in the numbers of military veterans previously discussed, the next logical assumption would be that respondents participating in this study who learned about the military primarily on their beat will concur with the need for prior training. They should also report generating more initiative stories and less dependence on official government press releases and defense contractors as the amount of their military beat training increases. The same should hold true for those who had served in the armed forces prior to assuming the military beat.

New reporters assigned to cover a military story without any previous military experience or training will probably be more likely to rely on official government sources of information unless alternatives have been provided through editors or military watchdog groups.

The following model should help explain how these factors would relate to an

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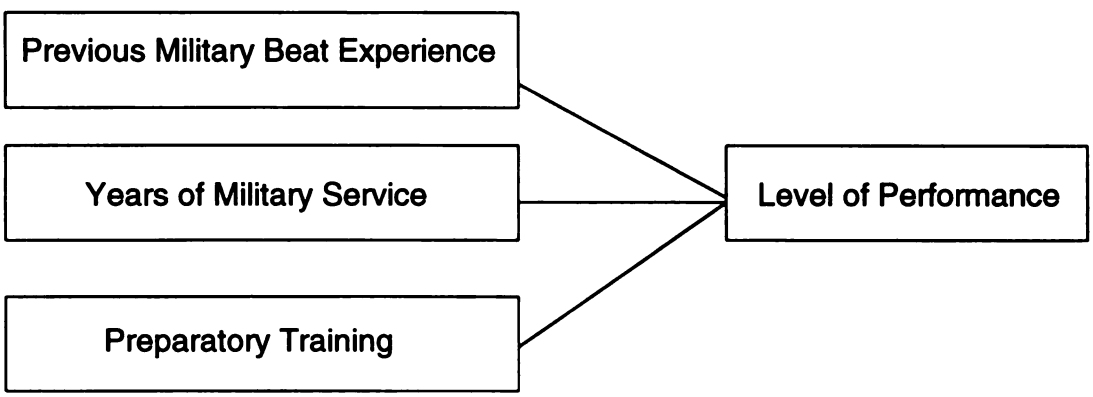
[17]Pamela J. Shoemaker and Stephen D. Reese, Mediating the Message (White Plains, N.Y.: Longman Publishers, 1991), 54, 220.

increased level of performance through more accurate stories that are clearer to the average reader.

Figure 3

Causal Model of the Suspected Relationship Between Previous Experience, Years of Military Service, Preparatory Training and Beat Performance



This model is supported by the findings in Lacy and Matusik's study on the dependency of journalists on organizational and beat sources. The two important trait factors they observed that affected the use of organization and beat sources were experience and the time a reporter spent working on the beat. The study explains a negative correlation between experience and the use of organizational sources by suggesting that experienced reporters may gain the ability to develop their own story ideas independent of such sources.[18]

[18]Stephen Lacy and David Matusik, "Dependence on Organization and Beat Sources for Story Ideas: A Case Study of Four Newspapers," Newspaper Research Journal 5 (Winter 1984): 15.

Critics of military reporters have often cited a lack of military experience among journalists and editors as the main cause of inaccuracies. The comments offered by respondents to this study in Appendix D tend to support such a claim.

Chapter 3

BACKGROUND AND HYPOTHESES

This chapter outlines some of the history in the development of military coverage as a specialized beat and the previous research affecting the study. Studies from other specialized beats have been incorporated since there are relatively few studies that examine military writers. The historical data also includes information on changes in the amount of access given to military correspondents since these shifts will tend to affect their relationship with officials and their willingness to accept training from them.

Concise History of American Military Reporting

Depending upon one's interpretation of what constitutes reporting, American military coverage could have started with Col. Daniel Boone's accounts of the Indian wars along the Ohio River from 1769 to 1784.[19] Early American newspapers did not have reporters and relied heavily upon other publications, official reports and letters from soldiers or eyewitnesses to report the events of the Revolutionary War and the War of 1812.[20]

For the purposes of this paper, however, we will concentrate on military coverage by those employed by a news organization to report on the actions of American military forces. Most studies place the emergence of the American military correspondent during the Mexican-American War. Reporters covering that campaign were allowed to ride along with General Zachary Taylor on U.S. Army horses. The reporters accompanying Taylor had no official restrictions and were able to take advantage of the telegraph to file more timely stories, resulting in extensive coverage of the campaign.

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[19]Mathews, 32.
[20]Aukofer and Lawrence, 35.

In fact, Nelson observed that the newspapers of the time were also very partisan and likely to report rumors and speculation along with details from the battlefield.[21] Their coverage of General Santa Ana's return from his exile in Cuba showed how President Polk had been duped when the general rallied Mexican troops instead of encouraging them to surrender.[22] This news was information that Polk would have liked to keep secret because of the embarrassment to his administration and shows how concerns about war coverage may have more to do with political issues in some cases than they do with national security requirements.

Civil War journalists were occasionally banished by some commanders from their camps, but most were provided liberal access and often received passes to visit combat zones. Only 150 of the 500 Northern journalists covering the war appeared to take advantage of such access to visit units in the field. Southern newspapers had even fewer reporters in the field because of their lack of resources.[23] Still, Roth contends that the Civil War was the best covered conflict of that era. He described the average Northern reporter as being in his twenties while six were still teenagers. Many had degrees and several had experience covering foreign wars. He credits the *New York Herald* as having the best coverage. Publisher James Gordon Bennett even dispatched correspondents to the South before the war began to cover both sides. Southern coverage came from paid "specials," volunteers, officers and enlisted men who regularly contributed their reports. Though fewer in number, the Southern correspondents were said to have much more freedom to operate.[24]

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[21]Anna Kasten Nelson, "Secret Agents and Security Leaks: President Polk and the Mexican War," Journalism Quarterly 52 (Autumn 1975): 15.
[22]Nelson, 17.
[23]Aukofer and Lawrence, 36-37.
[24]Michael P. Roth, Historical Dictionary of War Journalism (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1997),

Coverage of the Spanish-American War and the Philippine Insurrection was augmented by numerous soldiers who wrote accounts for their hometown newspapers. A survey by the U.S. Army's Military History Institute shows that most soldiers considered their comrades who wrote such accounts "in the same light as the civilian correspondent." Some news organizations continue to publish such accounts to give audiences a view from the soldier's perspective, especially where smaller media organizations are concerned since they are less likely to have the funds to send journalists to distant battlefields. Future conflicts may even contain more of this type of coverage as deployed troops increase their use of electronic mail and Defense Department programs provide avenues for citizens to send their own messages to troops abroad.[25] Appendix E contains a sample article solicited from the researcher by the *Milford* (Mich.)*Times* during the Persian Gulf Conflict.

Before America entered World War I, reporters were registered as British, French or neutral. British forces allowed journalists to visit the front lines as long as they were escorted. American newspapers sent the most reporters of any country covering the war. About 50 to 75 covered the early days of war from 1914. They were joined by several hundred colleagues after U.S. forces entered the conflict. A camp supporting journalists covering the American Expeditionary Force was established in France in 1917. One journalist was accredited to cover each division and provided with a car and access to the communications systems for filing stories. Non-accredited journalists were not given such support and could not travel outside of the area assigned to the division they were covering.[26]

4-6.
[25]"Welcome to Task Force Eagle, Send Mail to Soldiers Page," see www.tfeagle.army.mil/mail.htm.
[26]Roth, 350-351.

World War II also afforded many opportunities for journalists to travel with U.S. and allied forces. The 2,000 journalists covering the various fronts were able to accompany troops on bombing missions, amphibious assaults--some even parachuted with airborne forces on D-Day at Normandy. Thirty-seven journalists were killed and 112 were wounded covering battles. The pool system was created to allow a limited number of journalists to have access where transportation and other constraints posed limits. Media in the pool were expected to share their stories and pictures with those unable to accompany them. Censorship was more pervasive and freedom of media to roam about varied from one operational area to another. Journalists covering North Africa in 1942 were said to have the most freedom of movement since the vast distances involved in desert warfare encouraged a great deal of movement.[27]

Radio news coverage grew during the days preceding World War II. The first "World News Roundup" broadcast by CBS linked reporters in several capitals to cover the Nazi takeover of Austria. Such broadcasts would continue to bring first hand accounts and battlefield sounds into people's homes. Edward R. Murrow's reports from London rooftops gave Americans a taste of the terror felt by people in a city under attack by German bombers.

The broadest access was provided in Vietnam, with television news adding a new dimension that brought stirring pictures into American living rooms. The official U.S. policy toward the press during Vietnam was to promote "maximum candor and disclosure consistent with the requirements of security." Dealings with journalists by government sources were expected to be "effective and responsible."[28]

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[27]Ibid, 352-353.
[28]William M. Hammond, Public Affairs: The Military and the Media 1962-1968 (Washington, D.C., Center of Military History, 1988) 82.

Roth believes that Vietnam was "probably the most thoroughly covered war in history" because of the hundreds of journalists who covered the conflict from 1961 to 1975. Correspondents covering the war ranged in age from 25 to 35 years. Print journalists usually stayed from 12 to 18 months while broadcast journalists normally left after six months. Major news organizations usually sent experienced foreign correspondents, but even they lacked knowledge of unconventional operations. Almost 70 women covered the war. Two of them were among the 45 journalists killed covering the war. Combat coverage was the main effort of the American press. This was the first war where accredited journalists did not have to submit their stories to censors. It is also remembered as the first television war.[29]

Sims observes that news coverage of military issues declined in the early to mid-1970s, "principally as a result of the malaise over Vietnam." The Islamic Revolution in Iran and the resulting hostage crisis at the U.S. Embassy in Tehran, coupled with Afghanistan and other world events, were credited with creating a resurgence of interest in military affairs. However, the increasing immediacy of news coverage in the early 1980s caused Sims to speculate that future battlefields may be closed to the press.[30]

Such a blackout occurred during Operation Urgent Fury in Grenada which began on Oct. 25, 1983. The policy marked a historic shift in government policy toward defense coverage. A total ban on press access was maintained for the first two days of the invasion.[31] Secretary of State George Shultz told the media they had been excluded because they could no longer be trusted. Shultz argued that the media were "no longer on

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[29]Roth, 325-326.
[30]Robert B. Sims, The Pentagon Reporters (Washington D.C.: National Defense University Press, 1983), 148, 150.
[31]John B. Engber, "The Press and the Invasion of Grenada: Does the First Amendment Guarantee a Right of Access to Wartime News?" Temple Law Review 58 (1985), 875-877.

our side."[32] A pool of 15 journalists was flown by the military to the island on the third day, but unrestricted access did not begin until the airport was reopened on Nov. 7. Magazine publisher Larry Flynt filed suit over the exclusion of his reporter and other journalists from the initial assault, but the quick end to the operation caused the case to be dismissed as moot.

Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff General John W. Vessey, Jr. formed the Sidle Panel to examine the issues raised by the media after the Grenada invasion. The panel was chaired by Major General Winnant Sidle, U.S. Army (Ret.), who served as the chief of the Military Assistance Command Vietnam's Office of Information in 1967. The panel of former journalists and military officials provided recommendations to improve future media access during military operations.

These recommendations called for the development of officers to help guide inexperienced reporters and coordinate journalists' requests through the proper military channels.[33] This appears to be the first instance where it was suggested that military correspondents lacked the training and experience to understand some aspects of their beat, especially the need to maintain operational security.

All major news organizations readily accepted the panel's recommendations, with the exception of *Time* magazine, which later acquiesced for fear of being excluded from the next major military operation. Pools were not used, however, during the next major military operation when the U.S. conducted air strikes on Libya in 1985. Media protests were answered by the Defense Department with the comment that Sidle doesn't commit us to anything." Pools were used to cover the Dec. 19, 1989 invasion of Panama, but with

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[32]Tim Ahern, "Washington Dateline," Associated Press (Washington, D.C.), 15 Dec. 1983, no pag.
[33]Sidle Report, 14.

highly unsatisfactory results from the media's perspective. The pool arrived in Panama five hours late and was sequestered at Howard Air Force Base. Secretary of Defense Dick Cheney delayed activating the pool to prevent possible security breaches. Cheney also canceled Army plans to form a local pool out of media already in Panama to cover the first hours of the assault.[34]

Rather than expose the press to combat operations, the pool received two briefings from embassy personnel who gave the reporters background information on the operation's official justifications, but lacked any information on the battle. The first pool pictures and video were described in the *New York Times* as "nothing short of an Army recruiting film.[35] The Pentagon allowed twelve chartered flights of media to fly into Panama on Dec. 21 and 22, but the 300 journalists only further overwhelmed military public affairs personnel. It was not until Dec. 23 that the additional reporters were afforded any opportunity for coverage. Once again, a review panel was formed that found flaws with the planning. Williams held meetings with media representatives in Washington, D.C. that apparently convinced the major news organizations that access would be better the next time. Therefore, no one in the news media monitored what efforts the military was actually making to improve conditions for reporting the next campaign.[36]

Despite the problems journalists faced covering Grenada and Panama, Lynch still describes the 1980s as the "glory days" of defense journalism because of the interest created in the beat through President Reagan's "rearmament." He characterizes "waste,

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[34]Fred Hoffman, "Review of the Panama Pool Deployment" (Defense Information School: Ft. Ben Harrison, Ind., March 1990), 2.
[35]Eric Bochlert, "Panama Coverage: One Big PR Job," New York Times 17 Jan. 1990, sec. A, p. 25.
[36]Pascale M. Comballes, "Operation Just Cause: A Military-Media Fiasco," Military Media Review May-June 1995, 84-85.

fraud and abuse" as the "Holy Trinity" of defense journalists investigating alleged abuses in military procurement.[37]

Journalists from the DoD National Media Pool were able to accompany airborne forces making the initial entry into Saudi Arabia for Desert Shield. Once the Saudi government eased entry restrictions for Western journalists, their numbers soon grew and averaged 800 journalists at any one time.[38] Though media were allowed in with the initial stages of the operation, the Persian Gulf War was still seen as a departure from previous wars.[39]

The military believed that it was providing excellent coverage by allowing the media to visit ships, ride in planes, and travel aboard a variety of armored vehicles during the coverage before the war began.[40] Critics cite interference, however, by escorts who stepped in front of the camera to block shots, finished sentences or completely answered some questions for troops being interviewed. "They made it clear that GIs risked hell if they spoke their mind."[41]

Pool coverage allowed 161 reporters to accompany U.S. forces during the ground war in the Persian Gulf. Assistant Secretary of Defense for Public Affairs Pete Williams contrasted the coverage with the 27 journalists who were able to land with Allied forces on D-Day in Normandy.[42] Such a comparison, however, only denotes one beachhead in

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[37]David J. Lynch, "The Beat That Came in From the Cold," Washington Journalism Review (1992): 33-34.
[38]Capt. Michael T. Sherman, (US Navy, Ret.) "Forgive Us Our Press Passes," St. Johns Law Review 66 (1992): 640.
[39]Kevin P. Kenealey, "The Persian Gulf War and the Press: Is There a Constitutional Right of Access to Military Operations?" Northwestern Law Review 87 (1992): 287.
[40]Sherman, 644-645.
[41]Roone Arledge, "Letter to Cheney" June 24, 1991 (Memorandum from Arledge and 16 other news organization leaders forwarding concerns and recommendations about press restrictions during the Persian Gulf War.)
[42]Pete Williams, "Let's Face It, This Was the Best War Coverage We've Ever Had," Washington Post 17 March 1991, sec. D, p. 4.

an entire theater of operation. The 161 reporters in Desert Storm would be more comparable to the 150 Northern journalists covering the Civil War who likewise had to report upon units spread across wide areas.

After the Persian Gulf War, the defense beat seemed to deal more with human interest stories about downsizing. Editors wanted stories that gave audiences more of a perspective and explained the impacts of force reductions than those that demonstrated a reporter's knowledge of the defense industry.[43]

Previous Literature on Specialized Beats

Debate has continued for many years in this area as to whether it is more desirable for journalism students to rely on a broad liberal arts education or to seek specialized instruction, perhaps even taking a second major, to increase their opportunities for employment upon graduation.[44] Wolseley and Campbell advised those interested in specialized reporting to select an area where the prospective journalist has the most natural background or opportunity for concentration. Majoring in economics, natural sciences and sociology were cited as examples of concentrations that were helpful in allowing students to find work covering these specialties. However, they recognized that students may have difficulty focusing on a particular specialty too soon during their studies.[45]

Yet at one point, specialized curriculums seemed on the rise as more schools offered students programs to help them cover more complicated issues. Currently, health communications seems to be a growing field as health care issues become increasingly related to technology. In fact, a physician critical of the reporting on genetic engineering

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[43]Lynch, 34.
[44]Shoemaker and Reese, 62-64.

research said the reason the public did not hear more about the issues involved was the difficulty most reporters had in comprehending the technology.

Lovell advises new journalists performing "public affairs reporting" to "gather general knowledge" as soon as one is assigned to a specialized beat by becoming familiar with how the beat works. In the case of government beats, he suggests studying any guidebooks offered by the entity covered to learn how it operates and interviewing experts to become more familiar with the beat.

Those covering government beats should prepare for resistance by officials to the release of information by knowing their rights under laws covering the freedom of information and open meetings. The latest survey by Weaver and Wilhoit found that 58 percent of respondents cited "resistance by public officials, violations of open-records laws, or government secrecy" as their greatest external constraint to coverage. For example, a news director at television station in the South complained that, "Government agencies frequently dodge the issue and are slow to respond..." A radio news director in the Midwest said the biggest constraint was "federal government regulations and their interpretation by bureaucrats at all levels."[46]

It is also important, according to Lovell, to build good reference files, keep up with technical developments and learn the special problems and rules of the beat.[47]

Bernard Watkins, an attorney and legal educator, believes that reporters should prepare themselves better so that they fully understand the legal issues they cover, such as California's "Victim's Bill of Rights." He argues that most reporters focus entirely on the

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[45]Ronald E. Wolseley, and Laurence R. Campbell. Exploring Journalism; with Special Emphasis on its Social and Vocational Aspects, 2nd ed. (New York: Prentice Hall, 1949), 171.
[46]David H. Weaver and G. Cleveland Wilhoit, The American Journalist in the 1990s: U.S. News People at the End of an Era (Mahwah, N.J.: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 1996), 68-69.
[47]Ronald P. Lovell, Reporting Public Affairs (Belmont, Calif.: Wadsworth Publishing, 1983), 5-6.

"titillating" issues of the lawmen, criminals and citizens involved without ever discussing what impact the legislation would have on the rules of evidence and court backlogs.[48]

Watkins believes preparatory training in legal reporting would help provide better coverage without relying on lawyers who would use "tedious prose" to cover trails.[49] Ed Offley of the *Seattle-Post Intelligencer* has reportedly been trying to develop a Military Reporters Association that would provide such training opportunities for working journalists and students.[50]

Technical expertise is considered essential for science reporters who have to translate technical reports into language the average reader can comprehend.[51] Dr. James Stokley, chairman of the National Association of Science Writers' professional training committee, advocated an educational program for potential science writers that was heavily oriented toward science courses. His approach recommended that future science writers obtain a bachelor's degree with a major in one science or a broader interest in physical or biological sciences. However, this approach was not backed by the leaders of the NASW. Its Council for the Advancement of Science Writing inaugurated a much different program to give reporters on-the-job training.[52]

Such workplace training by professional groups is not always available and has lead to frustration for journalists new to a beat. During the early 1980s, the AFL-CIO and Ford Motor Company ran seminars that helped reporters interested in covering collective bargaining and other work-related issues. These seminars were discontinued for an

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[48]M.L. Stein, "School of law reporting proposed," Editor & Publisher 8 July 1989, 16.
[49]Ibid p.16
[50]Aukofer and Lawrence, 75.
[51]Conrad J. Storad, "Who Are the Metropolitan Daily Newspaper Science Journalists, And How Do They Work?" Newspaper Research Journal 6 (Fall 1984): 39-40.
[52]Dean Warren Burkett, Writing Science News for the Mass Media, 2nd ed. (Houston: Gulf Publishing, 1973), 60-62.

apparent lack of interest.[53] Such seminars may have been helped Canadian journalists new to labor coverage overcome their "greenness" to better understand the bargaining process by learning from patient sources who were willing to explain issues.[54]

Charles Corddry of the *Baltimore Sun* said that the Pentagon was baffling to many of his colleagues in the 1980s and feels that is the reason they did not give defense issues more coverage. Corddry feels that it takes time learn how to report national defense stories He said that "there is no way you can be an in-and-out reporter on defense, and no way you can know what you are doing after a short while."[55]

Many journalists fall into the habit of using "Mil-speak," and using terms such as ATAs and AWACS in their stories. As far back as the eighteenth century, Samuel Johnson accused journalists covering the military using language that was "utterly unintelligible to those who are not engaged in military or naval business."[56]

In more recent times, many Americans polled about the INF treaty proclaimed their support for the document but could not explain that the pact dealt with intermediate range nuclear forces (those equipped with missiles capable of reaching a target from 310 to 3,415 miles away).[57] The challenge for defense journalists is to provide information about operations or new military systems in such a way as the average citizen can understand. With the exception of the procurement stories about overpriced items such as screwdrivers and coffee pots, the general population is left without a common frame of

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[53]Murray Seeger, "The Old and Future Labor Beat," Neiman Reports (Fall 1994): 5.
[54]John A. Hannigan, Laboured Relations: Reporting Industrial Relations News in Canada (University of Toronto (Canada): Centre for Industrial Relations, 1986), 52-53.
[55]Sims, 26-27.
[56]Paul Mann, "The Washington Defense Journalist: An Eighteenth Century View" in Defense Beat: the Dilemmas of Defense Coverage, ed. Loren B. Thompson, (New York: Lexington Books, 1991) p. 69.
[57]Ibid, 68.

reference for many of the increasing complex stories.[58] Reporters who lack the capability to think in the abstract have had similar problems as they try to communicate with an audience that also does not understand science.[59]

Martin advocates a strong civic education program in the schools to make audiences more capable of following complex defense stories.[60] But a simpler solution may be found in an experiment that demonstrated that the use of analogies to help describe complex concepts. Analogies and parables were found to be the most effective means of helping different types of readers apply scientific concepts to their own experiences while examples were the least effective means.[61] Participants of the Science Writers Workshop training in 1980 reported the training made them less apprehensive about dealing with technical jargon.[62]

Still, Pentagon reporters studied in 1983 felt they were more qualified to cover defense issues than outsiders because the latter are frequently uniformed and pressed to produce stories before they fully comprehend the material. Those with more time on the beat are regarded as more knowledgeable and believed to have better sources. Some of the colleagues, however, feel that those who have been on the beat a long time lack enthusiasm while others say the more experienced reporters are simply avoiding specious stories that less experienced defense journalists are prone to cover. Of the 39 reporters studied in 1983, only 14 had military service and most of those were enlisted men who

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[58]Mann, 70.
[59]James E. Grunig, "Three Stopping Experiments on the Communication of Science," Journalism Quarterly 51 (Autumn 1974): 388.
[60]Mann, 71.
[61]Grunig, 399.
[62]Sharon M. Friedman, "Training Reporters to Cover Science & Technology" Professional Engineer 51 (September 1981): 23.

were drafted.[63] Healy describes the Defense Department as having a language and culture of its own.[64]

Inexperienced reporters and photographers can easily embarrass themselves and lose credibility with a source when their questions or requests reveal a total lack of understanding for the source's work.[65] Richard Whitmire, former regional defense reporter for Gannett News Service, stresses that it is important to know as much as one can before approaching Pentagon officials for an interview to avoid being ignored:

"If you go in and you know something, they'll really warm up to you. They respect knowledge a lot. What they don't respect is the press coming in and asking open-ended questions. If you ask a question imprecisely, ...they'll think you are going to be sloppy with the information. Then they'll think you're not worth talking to... that will be the end of it."[66]

Whitmire's comments were reinforced by an address given by General Peter Gration of the Australian Defense Force, who noted that the military would prefer to deal with professionals who understand the complexity of military operations and are capable of discerning major issues from trivia. One of the key points of his commentary was the call for a professional system of quality control for correspondents.[67]

Former diplomat Richard Burt believed that far too few journalists had an understanding of national security matters to accurately write about them, stating that the "jack of all trades" ability of a reporter was still more valued by editors. He believes that

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[63] Sims, 142-143.
[64]Healy, 95.
[65]Shoemaker and Reese, 59.
[66] Quoted in Campbell, 105.
[67]General Peter Gration, "Keynote Address" (delivered at International Conference on Defence and the Media in Time of Limited conflict, April 3-5, 1991; Brisbane, Australia) in Defence and the Media in Time of Limited War, ed. Peter R. Young. (Portland, Ore: Frank Cass, 1992), 20-21.

it is the "tradecraft" skills of reporters that take precedence for editors over subject-specific expertise. "In fact," Burt said, "there is a tendency for editors as well as fellow journalists to be skeptical of a colleague with special expertise on the grounds that he or she has somehow been coopted by the people or institutions they are assigned to cover. Thus, sheer ignorance often masquerades as "professional distance." [68]

Seventy-four percent of the respondents to the Freedom Forum survey of news personnel agreed somewhat or strongly agreed that journalists were lacking in knowledge of national defense matters such as military personnel, equipment capabilities and the specific aspects of foreign military threats. Only 15 percent of the military officers surveyed by the Freedom Forum felt that the news media had "almost always" been accurate in covering the Persian Gulf war. Seventy-three percent felt that journalist were "often" correct in reporting the same conflict, but often is a vague term that is harder to accept among professionals who depend upon accuracy to maintain their credibility.[69]

Joint Chiefs of Staff Chairman General John Shalikashvili said in the same survey, "There are reporters right now who would not know a battalion from a company." Former Associated Press Correspondent Fred Hoffman believes the press corps of today is disinterested and that major newspapers ignore important military news. Offley blames the problem on a shrinking full-time military reporting cadre that he estimated at around 50 in 1995. This observation seems consistent with the 1992 report in *Washington Journalism Review* that claimed the number of defense journalists was declining as the military and the defense industry began cutting back from the expansion of the 1980s. Some reporters were leaving the beat before being forced out while others were

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[68]R.R. Burt, "The News Media and National Security," in The Media and Foreign Policy, ed. S. Serfaty (New York: St. Martins Press, 1991), 140 -142.
[69]Aukofer and Lawrence, 32.

diversifying into areas such as the space program.[70]

Former Vietnam war correspondent Peter Braestrup explains that is why sexual-harassment scandals such as "Tailhook" or social issues like gays in the military receive coverage while traditional stories are "frozen out." [71] This is consistent with Friedman's observation that general assignment reporters tend to overplay economic and political issues because they are more familiar and easier to understand.[72]

Guy Gugliotta of the *Washington Post* reported difficulties understanding the new technology of the modern weaponry used in the Gulf War despite having served in the military during Vietnam. He relied heavily on public affairs officers to update his education about the military before covering the Persian Gulf War.[73] Hoffman advocated a training program to help improve coverage, but added that it would take a lot of salesmanship to get the military and editors to agree to it. Likewise, Lloyd argued that "national schools of war coverage" would be less desirous for Australian media, preferring the French concept of "immersion," so long as it was not a means for the military to approve journalists they liked.[74]

Jonathan Wolman, AP's Washington bureau chief, argues that many respected journalists such as Ernie Pyle covered the military without military experience.[75] Actually, Pyle did serve in the U.S. Naval Reserve and had an active interest in the military before covering World War II.[76]

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[70]Lynch, 33.
[71]Aukofer and Lawrence, 75.
[72]Friedman, 23.
[73]Aukofer and Lawrence, 74.
[74]Clem Lloyd, "The Case for the Media," in Defence and the Media in Time of Limited War, ed. Peter R. Young (Portland, Ore.,: Frank Cass, 1992), 64-65.
[75]Aukofer and Lawrence, 71.
[76]Lee Miller, The Story of Ernie Pyle (Garden City, N.Y.: Life Press, 1950), 11-12.

However, the more important point against Wolman's argument is that the military is much more complex today than it was in World War II. Scholars studying science writers have noted that the training received by previous generations of reporters is not necessarily what they would advocate for students today. In fact, Ryan and Dunwoody's study showed that science writers tended to recommend more science training than they had received before starting the beat, especially as participants in lab experiments. Their results show that for a beat as diverse as science reporting their is no "one path" to follow.[77]

Like science writers,[78] most defense writers covering the Pentagon operate on a breaking news basis.[79] This can be extremely dangerous in an environment where first reports are often wrong and the pressure to be first with the story is high.[80]

Healy believes the audience is better served when reporters develop the experience to pursue enterprise stories, but reporters say that it can take a long time for a journalist to learn the culture of the beat and learn the right questions to ask.[81] More specifically, labor reporters have stated one needs 1-2 years to master the essentials of covering their beat.[82] An editor at the *Washington Post* feels that it also takes at least a year for reporters to learn how to cover the Pentagon, likening the assignment to covering a foreign affairs beat.[83]

According to Healy, the challenge of defense coverage involves moving beyond

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[77]Michael Ryan and Sharon L. Dunwoody, "Academic and Professional Training Patterns of Science Writers," Journalism Quarterly 52 (Summer 1975): 246, 290.
[78]Storad, 47.
[79]David C. Martin, "Covering the Pentagon for Television: A Reporter's Perspective" in Defense Beat: the Dilemmas of Defense Coverage, ed. Loren B. Thompson (New York: Lexington Books, 1991), 83-84 and Healy, 96.
[80]Martin, 84.
[81]Healy, 96; and Hannigan, 52.
[82]Hannigan, 54.
[83] Lynch, 35.

handouts to uncover trends and develop sources early enough to allow the taxpayer a chance to react.[84] For example, Maitre argues that a trained press would have realized the differences in the bombs being used during Operation Desert Storm's air war, making them more suspicious of U.S. Air Force claims of "unlimited success" in their bombing when 90 percent of the ordnance dropped were simple gravity bombs.[85]

Such an inability to readily identify possible inconsistencies makes it easy for journalists to be mislead. Martin cites congressional protests regarding cost figures on the Stealth aircraft as an example of such manipulation. Congressmen critical of the project complained to the press about the difference between the original $35 billion cost estimate for the aircraft and the $70 billion actually paid without mentioning that the higher figure included fifteen years of adjustments for inflation. Martin believes someone who understands how weapons systems are developed and funded would not be easily misled into filing such a one-sided story, thus providing a more accurate and balanced report.[86] Such training may have helped advise new defense journalists covering protests by Republican lawmakers over Pentagon efforts to redistribute money from some anti-missile systems to seek nonpartisan sources such as the Defense Budget Project.[87]

Operational security is also a key concern from a national security standpoint and from an ethical perspective.[88] Martin believes that no American media organization would knowingly endanger the lives of U.S. forces, but at times he confesses that it is not always easy to know what harm may be caused. If that is so for an experienced network

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[84]Healy, 96-97.
[85]Maitre, 10.
[86]Martin, 86.
[87]Henry C. Kenski, Ph.D. Reporter's Source Book (Corvalis, Oregon: Project Vote Smart, 1994), 150.
[88]Sidle; and Aukofer and Lawrence, 24.

correspondent, it is probably more true of the less-seasoned journalist at the local affiliate.

Other increasingly complicated fields have developed specialized curriculum to help improve the coverage of science, medicine, agriculture, the environment and business. Specialized instruction about the military for journalists has been recommended in two studies,[89] but working journalists contend that it is difficult to obtain a release from their normal assignments for such an educational opportunity. Susan Schafer of the Associated Press was skeptical that she would actually be given a year's leave of absence to pursue training at the National War College until she received a $25,000 AP Study Grant.

Lisa Burgess was subsequently sponsored as a fellow of the Freedom Forum. Charles L. Overby, vice-president and chief executive officer of the group, said that Burgess was chosen to attend the War College because the Forum's own study had concluded that training and education of journalists about the military would enhance military-media relations. The reporter had previously written about the military for *Defense News* and *Commercial Aviation News*.[90]

Journalists from such defense-related trade publications were aggressively recruited by major publications during the 1980s who valued their experience. *Time* magazine, the *Washington Post*, the *New York Times*, *U.S. News & World Report* and the *Los Angeles Times* all went to specialty journals like *Defense Week* and the *National Journal* to find defense expertise.[91]

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[89]Everette et al, 96-97; and Aukofer and Lawrence, 55.
[90]"Fellowship seeks to improve media-military understanding," The Freedom Forum News, 24 June 1996, p. 2.
[91] Lynch, 34.

While trade publications may offer a talented pool for major publications to recruit from, there is still the broader question of how to prepare broadcasters and local media covering military installations. If military beat reporters were to receive the type of specialized instruction that has been given to some science writers, they might become better able to address the complexities of the defense beat, especially those who lack military service and are new to covering military issues.

Aukofer and Lawrence recommended that such training be conducted where journalism schools and Reserve Officer Training Corps programs are co-located. The problem with this recommendation is that ROTC programs are taught by active duty military personnel. They are designed more for the training of potential officers in the armed forces. Editors would probably fear graduates of such a program would be too indoctrinated to report critically about the military. The ROTC programs are also geared toward individual services and might not offer broad enough information to prepare journalists to cover the other armed services.

Campbell argues that a new defense journalist should first decide where the focus of his or her coverage will lie. He contends that only the reporters for wire services and major dailies can try to keep up with everything. Sometimes the type of media organization one represents can help determine where to concentrate one's efforts. He suggests starting one's education by getting to know military public affairs officers. Congressional staffers were also cited as sources who can get information from the Pentagon that a journalist may not otherwise be able to obtain. Think tanks, watchdog organizations, defense contractors and college faculty members are also recommended

sources.[92]

Maitre recommends that the military gather 150 military correspondents at selected bases once a conflict has become imminent. He feels a training program for these journalists that includes parachute jumps, survival training and "military lingo" would given them the credibility to operate more freely among military units.[93] Such was not the case for Australia's media during a training exercise held in 1986. Australian officials noted that most of the journalists covering the training tended to stick close to the Media Support Unit provided by the military and work from the briefing materials the unit provided, a finding defense officials claimed was consistent with coverage of the Falkland Island War. The briefing room was seen as a place of reassurance to journalists cast into unfamiliar surroundings.[94]

Science writers surveyed felt that former colleagues and journalism educators were the best instructors to prepare journalists for their field.[95] Boston University offers a graduate study course in "Reporting Military Affairs" taught by Maitre, a former war correspondent. The course offers students selected readings on the role of the press in covering military conflicts as well and the methods used to cover military affairs during peacetime.[96]

Military journalist and educator William Kennedy believes formal military education is available to anyone willing and physically capable to serve in the National Guard or Reserve. Even without formal affiliation, Kennedy contends that such education

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[92] Campbell, Don Inside the Beltway: A Guide to Washington Reporting (Washington, D.C.: Washington Journalism Center, 1991), 103-105.
[93] Maitre, 50.
[94] Lloyd, 60-61.
[95] Roger Allen Myers, "The Training of Science News Reporters," in "Journalism and Journalism Education: Abstracts of Doctoral Dissertations," DAI 40, (1979) 11 (ERIC ED 189651).
[96] "Reporting Military Affairs," Boston University College of Communication Course Catalog (Boston, Mass: 1997/1998), 53.

is or could be made readily available through correspondence courses administered by all of the armed forces. He cites the command and general staff college course as the minimum required to gain an overview. Kennedy believes that it would be easy to incorporate course material into a graduate program at a civilian university that wants to produce specialists in defense journalism.[97]

From that base of instruction, Kennedy feels that the military magazines and other periodicals that specialize in defense maters become more intelligible. The Center for Defense Journalism offers access to the major trade publications that cover the armed forces and the defense industry. Additionally, the Center publishes a monthly newsletter, *Defense Media Review*, which offers information on recent trends in defense issues and military coverage.

Hypotheses and Research Questions

Existing research suggests the following hypotheses:

H1. The number of military veterans covering the military will be fewer than those journalists without military experience.

H2. Of those journalists who began covering the military without any specialized knowledge of the armed forces, the proportion who recommend some type training for those preparing for the beat will be higher than the proportion who recommend no training.

H3. Those journalists without previous military knowledge will report more reliance for story ideas on official government sources and defense contractors.

H4. Those journalists who served in the military or who report the most experience on the military beat will report less reliance for story ideas on official government sources and

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[97]William V. Kennedy, The Military and the Media: Why the Press Cannot be Trusted to Cover a War (Westport, Conn.:Praeger), 74-75.

defense contractors than those who are newly assigned to the beat.

The following research questions also will be answered:

RQ1. How well do journalists on the beat feel their training prepared them to cover the military?

RQ2. What training areas do military reporters believe would be most helpful to avoid confusion among new colleagues?

RQ3. Does the defense journalist learn about the military mainly from Defense Department sources or from those outside the government?

RQ4. How many sources does the journalist use from outside of the Department of Defense or from defense contractors?

RQ5. How long does the average journalist remain on the defense beat before they have developed enough experience to pursue their own enterprise stories?

RQ6. Does it take longer for a journalist covering local military installations or those covering the Pentagon to develop enough experience to pursue enterprise stories?

RQ7. What types of military stories has the respondent covered? (i.e. personnel, equipment or technology related)

Veterans are defined for this study as former members of the U.S. Armed Forces, either active duty or reserve. Enterprise stories refer to those reports begun on a journalist's own initiative based upon trends observed on the beat. Sources includes any information issued by a recognizable entity, such as the Department of Defense, either through a spokesperson, written statement or Internet services (i.e. Defenselink).

Chapter 4

METHOD

This chapter offers additional information on the method used to conduct this research. The principal instrument consisted of a survey questionnaire that was sent to print and broadcast journalists covering the Pentagon on a daily basis and to those covering the military in areas where there is a high concentration of military personnel. According to Department of Defense statistics, the major locations of military personnel are Fort Hood, Texas; Fort Bragg, N.C.; Arlington and Norfolk, Va.; Camp Lejeune, N.C.; San Diego and Camp Pendleton, Calif.; Fort Campbell, Ky.; Washington, D.C. and Fort Benning, Ga.

Additionally, the Center for Defense Information, offers a table of the top ten states where military facilities are located. The Defense Department list is especially useful because it provides a sampling of areas with major military installations that vary in terms of media market. The high percentage of military personnel in the local audience demographics of these markets would make the media there more likely to have a military beat reporter as opposed to covering local defense stories with a general assignment reporter. The exact number of reporters involved will depend on the number of organizations that actually have reporters assigned to the military beat in their market.

The names of Washington-area reporters were requested through the Office of the Assistant to the Secretary of Defense for Public Affairs, which issues credentials to reporters assigned to cover the Pentagon. Journalists in local markets were sought by writing the public affairs offices at U.S. Atlantic Command, U.S Pacific Command, U.S. Central Command, U.S. Transportation Command as well as their counterparts at the top ten locations previously mentioned. Appendix B provides a sample letter sent to public affairs offices requesting the names of journalists on their media lists.

The requests identified a population of 189 organizations that regularly cover

military affairs. Specific names were not available for a military reporter at each location. One public affairs office noted in its response that they only kept lists of organizations because the journalists covering the military in their market changed jobs too often to keep any lists with names accurate. Additionally, one North Carolina editor responded that his newspaper covered military stories less frequently and rotated such assignments too often to identify any particular reporter. This news management technique may have been present at other media organizations receiving the questionnaire, making it harder for them to identify a knowledgeable participant, thus contributing to the low response rate.

A cover letter addressed to editors and news directors was added to the surveys sent to organizations where no military beat reporter had been identified. The letter asked those assigning the stories to forward the survey to the journalist from their organization who most often covered military stories. It was hoped that the response rate of the survey would be enhanced by addressing correspondence to specific journalists instead of using a generic title such as "military reporter." However, the number of surveys sent directly to a military reporter was not as high as desired. A copy of the letter to the editors and news directors, as well as a sample survey, can be found in Appendix C.

The survey was designed to provide useful demographic data to compare defense beat journalists with trends observed in research on journalists in other specialties. Such data might be useful in creating an initial overview of the type of journalists assigned to the military beats, possibly providing a baseline for observing future trends in the type of people who cover the military and how they are trained.

Likert-scale tests measuring a journalist's satisfaction with their previous training were used to indicate an individual readiness to assume the military beat. All scales used offered at least five options. An open-ended list of potential training areas for journalists was offered to seek recommendations from those who have actually covered the military.

Ordinal variables were used to achieve average rankings for assessments on the types of stories covered most often, topics that should be included in preparatory training and sources for stories ideas. It was believed that reporters with previous military service would be able to identify which areas of their past experience were most helpful in their new role as journalists covering their military beat and those without such knowledge would be able to identify what areas would have been the most useful to have studied in preparatory training.

A test mailing of the instrument was sent to 10 subjects on Dec. 14, 1996. Four of these samples were returned with no apparent difficulties among the respondents at comprehending the instructions. With a 40 percent response rate to the test mailing it was believed that the overall response rate would be high. However, the response rate to the first wave mailed on June 10, 1997 yielded only about 14 percent (n=24) from the additional 174 sent.

A second wave was mailed to the 156 journalists in the population who had not responded. This brought in an additional seven responses bringing the total to 35. Post cards were sent to those still outstanding which yielded responses from people saying they received the cards but had not seen the questionnaire. Another four questionnaires were received from these respondents, bringing the final tally to 39. A few partial responses were received via email from journalists who felt they would have only limited input to offer.

The low response rate of 21 percent makes it difficult to infer statistically that the recommendations offered by respondents will be consistent with the views of military writers across the country. This is especially true in the smaller markets where there were fewer respondents. Response rates for future researchers would probably be better if they use telephone calls to solicit names of potential participants instead of relying upon an editor or news director to select someone.

What the results can provide are descriptive statistics that can be used to refine the hypotheses studied and foster future research to achieve a more representative sampling of defense journalists from across the country. Medians will be discussed to describe the central tendencies found in responses to questions related to Hypothesis Number One and Research Questions One through Four and Six through Eight. Hypotheses Number Two through Four and Research Question Five deal with comparisons between local and Pentagon-level correspondents that are normally studied using a measure of association will be used to help understand the differences between the two variables. However, the small sample size in this case resulted in chi square cells less than five and occasionally in zeros, making attempts to use Cramer's V unreliable. Therefore, the comparisons discussed will rely on the use of means to provide descriptive data on the central tendencies of the two groups.

Such data gathered should be useful to editors and news directors evaluating the need for an internal training or the effectiveness of techniques already in place to help journalists cover the military. It also is useful for military writers considering the need for a professional organization such as the National Association of Science Writers or the Society of Environmental Journalists to help reporters share information on how to cover complex, ever changing beats. Such a national organization would provide a more representative voice in resolving issues with the Defense Department over access than relying on networks and major publications to speak for all media. Additionally, the study provides additional data to military professionals who often prepare training opportunities for media based on military subjects they assume journalists need or want to know more about.

Finally, it also will be helpful in soliciting support from defense contractors, military support organizations (i.e. the Marine Corps League, the Navy League, the Association of the U.S. Army and the Air Force Association) toward support a more

comprehensive effort. Since coverage of the military may affect the public and Congressional support the services receive, such groups have an interest in encouraging thorough, accurate and balanced reporting of defense issues. They do not face the same restrictions placed upon the Defense Department that limit the types of studies that can be done of American citizens since public funds are not used to fund such support groups.

Chapter 5

RESULTS

This chapter will provide the findings taken from the 39 questionnaires returned by the participants of this study. There also will be references where pertinent to the input submitted by military writers who did not wish to submit a complete survey but still wished to contribute. Such contributions will only be used to illustrate and summarize key points among the findings. No attempt has been made to factor such partial input into the overall percentages reported among the results.

The vast majority of the respondents were male (n=30). Only 23 percent (n=9) were female. The average age was 41.36 years with 15.78 years average reporting experience. The average time spent on the military beat was 7.57 years.

Twenty-three percent felt they were chosen for the beat because of their ability at general assignment stories. The next highest group was the 18 percent who volunteered because of a personal interest in military subjects. Another 15 percent felt they were assigned because their previous military experience. Fifteen percent expressed a variety of reasons why they were chosen by selecting the "Other" option. Those who volunteered to improve their skills as a beat reporter accounted for 2 percent. Eight percent indicated they were uncertain why they were chosen for the beat.

The remaining 20 percent all gave multiple reasons why they were assigned to the beat. Of this group, 5 percent said they were chosen because of previous military experience and their personal interest in military stories. Such a personal interest coupled with an ability for general assignment stories and a desire to further develop skills as a beat reporter were reported by 3 percent. An ability for general assignments stories, previous military experience and personal interest were reported by another 3 percent. Another 3 percent were also personally interested in military subjects as well as showing ability at general assignments and had previous military experience. Three percent said

they were hired for the general assignment ability and previous military experience. The remaining 3 percent said they were chosen for both of those reasons as well as the desire to develop beat skills and a personal interest in military subjects.

Almost half (49 percent) worked for newspapers. Magazines were next highest with 15 percent. Ten percent worked for television stations. Radio stations comprised 8 percent. Radio and television networks were evenly matched at 3 percent each. Wire services made up another 10 percent. One of these respondents was a freelance writer who wrote for print and broadcast media. The remaining 2 percent consisted of a respondent who belonged to a non-government organization that is active in organizing periodic gatherings where guest speakers address defense journalists on military issues.

Hypothesis Number One expected to find that the number of military veterans covering the armed forces would be less than those journalists covering the military without having any military experience. As expected, the findings showed that most of the journalists responding to this study did not have any military service before they began covering the military. In fact, only 26 percent (n=10) reported having served in uniform. The average time served among the veterans was 11.2 years, which 92 percent felt was "very helpful" in preparing them to report about the military. Only one veteran felt the experience was not helpful. Such assessments answered Research Question One that asked how well journalists on the beat feel their training prepared them to cover the military.

Hypothesis Number Two stated that among those journalist who began covering the military without any specialized knowledge, the proportion of those who recommend some type of training for those preparing for the beat would be higher than those who feel such training makes no difference. The results supported this hypothesis with 67 percent of the non-veterans (n=16) responding that some type of training would have been "very helpful" in preparing them to assume the defense beat. Another 33 percent (n=8) thought

such training would have been "somewhat helpful. " No one reported being unsure nor were there any assessments saying the training would not be helpful. However, it should be noted that there were five respondents aside from the veterans who did not respond to this question.

One television network correspondent who declined to submit a completed survey also concurred on the usefulness of this type of training but also said it was not absolutely essential. Several experienced correspondents wrote comments that indicated the best training was spending more time in the field with units performing actual missions or pre-deployment training.

Fifty-two percent (n=20) of the 39 respondents answering a question about the type of preparation they received from their employer reported that they received no special training of any kind. Twenty-six percent (n=10) said they received on-the-job training with the journalist leaving the beat. Three percent (n=1) received background notes from their predecessors to help them prepare. Another 8 percent reported receiving "other" types of training. These included such steps as a half-hour orientation from an editor, time for self-preparation and learning from other staff members married to military personnel. One of the military veterans reported his organization gave him time to visit military bases and read to broaden his previous experience. There was one missing case that accounted for the remaining 3 percent.

Only 14 non-veteran journalists who received training rated its value. Of these, 21 percent said their training was "very effective," 51 percent rated their preparation as "somewhat effective," 14 percent said it was "not very effective" and the remaining 7 percent assessed their training as "not effective at all." Along with assessments on the value of military experience, this data also helps answer Research Question One, indicating that having some kind of training is better than no training at all.

Research Question Two asked what training areas military reporters thought

would be most helpful to avoid confusion among those new to the beat. Journalists were also asked to rate the importance of understanding different aspects of the military before one begins covering the armed forces. Most had their own ideas of the most important area to study. It was surprising to see the low importance given ascribed to training in non-traditional uses of the military and allied operations despite the increase uses of U.S. forces for operations other than war and as members of coalition forces.

Ironically, simpler areas such as ranks structures and how staffs are organized were ranked very high in importance. These are topics that most in uniform take for granted because they were part of their "basic training."

The coverage of alleged procurement abuses in the 1980s should have placed training about the procurement process much higher than the 7.1 mean. Widespread coverage of counter-drug and humanitarian operations also did not seem reflected. Table 1 shows rankings that respondents gave to different subject areas that one might include in a proposed curriculum for training military writers.

Table 1
Ratings for Possible Subjects Areas for Pre-Coverage Training*

Possible Course Areas	Rating Mean
Other	2.03
Military Rank System	3.72
Military Staff Structures	4.69
Basic Military Tactics	5.18
Brief History of Services	5.36
Sources on Weapons & Equipment	5.49
Military Justice	6.26
Legal and Policy Limitations	6.83
Joint Operations	7.02
Procurement Process	7.10
Non-traditional Military Uses	7.18
Field Equipment for Reporters	7.59
Military Supply and Logistics	8
Allied Operations	8.08

***This table shows the average ranking given by respondents to areas one should understand before covering the military with 1 being the most important and 14 being the least.**

Hypothesis Number Three said that journalists without previous military knowledge would report more reliance for story ideas on official government sources and defense contractors. The results did not support this statement. Rather, they showed a surprise among the journalists without any previous military experience in their assessments for the sources of their story ideas. In fact, Table 2 shows that those with some previous military knowledge were reporting almost four percent more reliance on official sources than those without such preparation.

Table 2
Comparisons of Sources for Story Ideas Between Non-Veterans With Training Prior To Coverage and Those Without Such Preparation

Source for story ideas	Those with no training	Those with some training
DoD/Local military	13.2%	16.9%
Outside sources	10.0%	12.1%
Contractor	03.0%	03.4%
Civilian Organization	05.0%	04.0%
Editor	08.3%	08.1%
Other publications	11.1%	09.6%
Broadcast stories	03.4%	04.9%
Own ideas	36.3%	35.0%
Other types of sources	09.7%	06.0%
N=	19	20

Even more startling were the results of tests for Hypothesis Number Four which expected to show that journalists who had served in the military would show less reliance on official sources for story ideas than those new to the beat. It was expected that the results of the study would show much more use of outside sources by veterans cultivated through the added experience level of this group.

Table 3 below, however, shows that veterans reported even higher uses of official sources than those lacking military service or any previous training before assuming the beat. This may be due to a measurement error caused by those who considered any military personnel interviewed to be official sources even if the contact was obtained without official support from government public affairs representatives. It may also be

possible that those journalists who served in uniform tend to have more trust in sources that are also in uniform.

Research Question Three asked whether the defense journalist learns about the military mainly from Defense Department sources or from outside the government. It was hoped that the comparison between the source reliance of those with previous military experience and those without such a background would answer this question. If those without military experience tended to rely more on official sources than veterans, it might have supported the notion that they were learning more from the public affairs personnel whose positions were created to educate them. Based on the results, it seems that a better method of resolving this question would be through oral interviews where participants could be more specific about their training.

Table 3
Comparisons of Sources of Story Ideas Between Veterans and Non-Veterans

Sources for story ideas	Those with military experience	Those without military experience
DoD/Local military	20.0%	13.2%
Outside sources	15.0%	09.4%
Contractor	03.0%	03.2%
Civilian Organization	07.0%	03.3%
Editor	08.0%	08.2%
Other publications	12.0%	10.0%
Broadcast stories	05.0%	04.0%
Own ideas	28.0%	38.3%
Other types of sources	02.0%	10.4%
N=	10	29

The use of non-official sources was also used to measure the respondent's ability to gain enough experience to go beyond the official channels of information offered through the unit or the Department of Defense. Research Question Four asked how many sources journalists used from outside the Defense Department in covering their stories. Thirty-three percent reported using an average of one to two additional sources, 28

percent use three to four, 26 percent use more than six and the remaining five percent use five to six. Eight percent did not select any of the answers offered. The reports were higher than expected based on the number of written comments submitted that stated the respondent's biggest concern was the reliance of colleagues on the beat who relied too heavily on official releases and briefings for the bulk of their source material.

Research Question Five asked how long the average journalist was on the military beat before they developed enough experience to pursue their own enterprise stories. Veterans and those receiving on-the-job training may have contributed to the 33 percent who felt they were comfortable enough within the first month to develop story ideas of their own. The next highest group, 21 percent (n=8), reported taking four to six months to reach that level. Eighteen percent felt comfortable between two to three months as did those who took more than six months. Five percent were not sure how long it took them become comfortable on the beat.

In comparing the journalist covering the military at the local level and those covering the Pentagon, I expected to find that military journalists in Washington will have the most professional experience overall. Newspaper reporters covering local installations were expected to have more experience because of the higher level of turnover in the broadcast industry.

Research Question Six asked whether journalists covering the military at the local level would take longer to develop enough experience to pursue enterprise stories based on their own ideas than reporters covering the Pentagon. Table 4 below shows the comparison between the answers provided by local media and Pentagon correspondents to this question.

Table 4
Comparison of Confidence Levels Between Local Media Covering Military Installations and Pentagon Correspondents

Confidence Level	Local Media	Pentagon Media
One Month	17%	45%
2-3 Months	25%	17%
4-6 Months	33%	17%
More Than 6 Months	25%	17%
Not Sure	00%	04%

Research Question Seven asked what types of military stories has the respondent covered most often. Journalists were asked to rank from 1 to 4 the types of stories they covered most often. First among their choices were stories about local military units with a mean ranking of 1.63. Second were national stories that affected all of the armed services with a mean ranking of 2.11. Third place went to the "Other" category which had a mean ranking of 2.5 while stories about defense contractors came last, averaging 3.

These choices seem to coincide with the lower ranking given to "stories about weapons" and "stories about equipment" in terms of the assignments covered most often. Journalists were also asked to rank from 1 to 7 the types of assignments they covered most often. Their tendency to cover equipment stories less may have to do with the increasing complexity of modern military equipment and the difficulties in marketing technical stories to mass audiences.

Most journalists ranked the "Other" option closest to 1 with an average ranking of 1.79 as the type of assignment they reported most. Their explanations for such coverage consisted mainly of specialized interests in strategy and tactics, policies, international relations, congressional action, retirees and ex-military personnel, gender issues, readiness, controversies and scandal, societal issues that impact the military and history. Table 5 shows the average rankings.

Table 5
Assessments of Stories Most Often Covered By Military Writers

Type of Assignment	Average Ranking
Stories about military personnel	2.211
Stories about exercise	3.31
Stories about actual operations	3.42
Stories about weapons	4.211
Stories about military families	4.26
Stories about equipment	4.45

Time should not have precluded the participants from tackling more complicated stories since 51 percent reported spending 81-100 percent of their work week covering the military, contributing to the average of 1.2 additional beats among them. Sixteen reported having no other beats besides their military coverage. Those working 21-40 percent and 41-60 percent of the week were evenly matched at 13 percent each. Ten percent reported spending 20 percent or less time on the beat while another 5 percent worked 61-80 percent.

The final question on the survey was an open invitation for journalist to state their concerns about the state of reporting U.S. military operations. Their comments are transcribed in Appendix D. They include comments about the lack of prior military experience among those covering the military and its impact on a journalist's accuracy and credibility.

"Very few reporters have any personal military experience and reporters assigned to military stories do not take time, or are not given the time to become familiar with the services, their culture, organization, how and why they do what they do ... As a result stories are lacking in perspective, frequently wrong in fact and often slanted because of an anti-military bias ... This increasingly distorts the public's perception of the military." (See item 15, Appendix D.)

There was also some concern about the willingness of some journalists to cover

the military from Washington without getting out into the field to see for themselves how well operations are going. "The pack at the Tuesday/Thursday Pentagon briefing is growing," lamented one journalist. "Too many reporters are becoming spoon-fed there and on the Hill." (See item 20, Appendix D.)

There were also several respondents concerned about the control that military public affairs officers maintain over access to personnel. Their comments stressed the need for more openness and willingness to discuss more sensitive issues without trying to put a "spin" on the story. One respondent felt that public affairs officers were being too successful in coopting military beat reporters which he believed contributed more to their "hawkish" accounts more than any lack of knowledge.

"I think journalists have to work hard to overcome the handicap of working through public affairs, whose only job is to make their services look good," argued one writer. "If news is to be fair accurate and impartial, a reporter has to develop sources and not be spoon fed or shackled by the PAOs." (See item 6, Appendix D.)

Like Offley, several were concerned about the number of journalists still assigned to the military beat. They too see declining numbers in their midst. Among them was the comment, "I find few people devoted to military coverage -- TV sends a kid who doesn't know a Harrier from a carrier, or a corporal from a colonel, to cover an event. The military tends to respect someone who has done their homework, observes a semblance of military protocol, and is not a hazard to themselves or others in the field, on a boat or in an aircraft." (See item 5, Appendix D.)

Chapter 6

DISCUSSION

The data collected during this study, while not a representative sample of all journalists covering the military, still offers some interesting comparisons with previous literature on military journalists and other beat reporters.

While defense reporters were still found to be predominantly male, the nine female reporters responding to the survey did represent an increase from the lone woman included among the Pentagon journalists in Sims' study in 1983. Three of the nine women responding to this study were among the 16 Washington area journalists participating.

The average age of 41.36 years was consistent with Sims' observation that just over half of Pentagon reporters were over 40. This is somewhat younger than the 48 years of age achieved by the average science reporter responding to Small's 1964 study and considerably older than the 26.7 years of the average beat reporter in Lacy and Matusik's research. Labor reporters in Canada were also younger, averaging 30-40 years of age.

Defense reporters in this study averaged 15.78 years reporting experience as opposed to the 24 years of professional experience noted among the average science writer. Sims study also noted that 41 percent of the 39 Pentagon reporters studied had more than 20 years of experience and only 4 had less than 10 years. The latter was true for the 16 Washington journalists in this study. Almost 44 percent of the 16 (n=7) had more than 20 years of reporting experience which raised the average years of experience for Pentagon area media to 16.56. Much higher than the 2.32 years experience noted by Lacy and Matusik in the average beat reporter they studied or the two years of general experience averaged by Canadian labor reporters .

The average military beat time of 7.57 years included five Washington journalists

who were in their first three years of covering the Pentagon as opposed to three in 1983. Science reporters studied averaged 14 years on the beat.

The finding that a personal interest in military subjects was cited in 32 percent of the responses was comparable with the one-third of the Canadian labor reporters interviewed who actively sought their beat. The 35 percent of occurrences were a journalist felt the assignment to the beat was related to an ability to cover general assignment stories supports the contention of Sims and Lynch that the trend in defense coverage has become increasingly reliant on general assignment reporters since the 1980s.

The finding that only 26 percent (n=10) reported having served in uniform was consistent with the introduction of the all-volunteer force and Sims' earlier observation that the American society and the defense press corps was moving toward a population that had not served in the military. However, even if more veterans were available, Mathews historical research would predict that the proportion of those with military experience and the literary skills to make good would probably still be insufficient.

Among the veterans in this study, the average time served of 11.2 years seems much higher than that served by the 14 veterans in Sims' study. Most of his group were draftees who normally serve about two years active duty. The finding that veterans generally find their experience helpful supports the arguments made by military participants in Aukofer and Lawrence's study that journalists should receive some type of training to help them understand the complexities of the military beat. Such arguments are also supported by the disappointment expressed by the majority of the 14 journalists who received training by their organizations, but who found it either slightly effective or not very effective. Most Canadian labor reporters studied likewise lacked any type of apprenticeship with an experienced colleague and had to learn while doing the job.

The ratings in Table 2 regarding the value of proposed training areas for defense

journalists are similar to Small's results that gave science writers a chance to rate the importance of different subjects in training science reporters. Like the previous study, the results should help educators and media managers prioritize their training strategies to make the best use of available time.

The finding that most defense journalists rely on their own ideas to generate stories seems consistent with the negative relationship found by Lacy and Matusik between experience and the use of organizational sources. Their study suggested that reporters either gain the ability to generate their own sources as they gain experience or assimilate the values of the organization. Based on these earlier findings it was expected that most veterans would report higher journalistic initiative then their non-uniformed colleagues. But actual findings showed that veterans report lower percentages of stories coming from their "own ideas" than those with little or no training about the military before assuming the beat. This trend among veterans that is most likely related to the belief that journalists assimilate the values of organization they cover.

The data supports Geiger and Johnson's conclusions that even though reporters overtly resist attempts to be assimilated, their desire to serve the public can create a strong "in-group" loyalty that makes them more likely to avoid conflicts. The researchers also noted that the functional relationships that city hall reporters had with their sources made them more cooperative and willing to collaborate on stories.[98] Since journalists who were veterans already had long term exposure to the military beliefs during their careers in the armed forces, they may already bring some "in-group" loyalty with them when they start the beat.

Such data did not support Hypotheses Number Three and Four, which predicted veterans to be the journalists with the least reliance on official sources. Another explanation may be a lack of agreement as to what constitutes a military story as well as

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[98]Walter Gieber and Walter Johnson, "The City Hall "Beat": A Study of Reporter and Source Roles," Journalism Quarterly 38 (Summer 1961):297.

whether military sources identified by the journalist through unofficial channels still constitute an "official" response to a query.

A story about the reaction of military personnel at a local base to the latest Tom Clancy novel may seem like a defense related story to a local journalist but might seem more like an entertainment feature to a Pentagon reporter. Future studies should use trained interviewers to ensure that respondents fully understand the definitions of what is meant by terms like "military story" and "official source."

The amount of time that military journalists had to focus on this beat also may have contributed to the decreased dependency on official sources by non-veterans. The findings in this showed that 51 percent spend 81 to 100 percent of their work hours on the military beat with 16 having no other beats. Such findings compared well with the 79 percent of the week spent on the job by the average science writer. The average military writer fared slightly better at 1.2 additional beats than the 2.6 beats averaged among beat reporters in Lacy and Matusik's study. However, their study was focused on suburban dailies which tend to have smaller staffs, making the higher number of beats understandable.

The heavy use of official sources was noted in the open comments included from journalists who complained about the number of defense reporters who are too willing to be "spoon fed." Such comments may indicate that assimilation by veterans has more to do with their higher level of dependence. However, observations of British and Australian defense officials also indicate that the military briefings offered by official sources have a way of making the unfamiliar subject seem less uncomfortable. Veterans should not be unfamiliar with military topics, unless they are covering a military service other than the one they served in or units that are very different from the ones where they served.

Differences of opinion as to what constitutes a military story also may affect the

tendency for substantial numbers of defense reporters to claim they are comfortable generating story ideas within a month when Canadian labor reporters felt a year or more was needed to be fully competent on the beat. Healy and other experienced defense journalists likewise claim that it can take a year to become seasoned on the military beat. The high tendency shown toward covering stories involving personnel supports earlier claims that reporters are opting for more human interest stories and staying away from more complex issues that would take longer to be comfortable with.

A better explanation for this difference lies in Table 4 which shows the proportion of journalists claiming confidence within a month are mostly the Pentagon press corps who generally have more overall reporting experience. Some have also worked for specialized publications covering the defense industry. Their increased overall experience, along with the veterans who felt their military service was helpful in preparing them for the beat and the journalists' criticism of unschooled colleagues in Appendix D, help support the causal model in Chapter 2 that suggests a positive relationship between experience, military service and preparatory training as contributors to higher levels of performance.

The findings that military service was helpful to veterans in preparing them for the beat and that most non-veterans agree that some type of preparatory training would be very helpful offer additional support for such a relationship. They also help support Aukofer and Lawrence's recommendations for a training program to prepare journalist for the beat. The rankings for areas that such training should include offer useful alternatives to the recommendations to use ROTC programs to help train journalism students or Maitre's notion of establishing pre-deployment training camps or programs similar to those used by the Australian defense forces to accredit their media.

While this study was helpful in confirming the desirability of preparatory training among military journalists, it also demonstrates that it is easier to get people to agree that

training is helpful than to find consensus on the best means to accomplish it. The wide diversity among the topics journalists believed were the most important for training and the types of stories military journalists reported covering the most showed the difficulties one faces in trying to develop a training program that satisfies everyone. This observation supports Campbell's belief that the journalist on the defense beat should find an area to specialize in since he believes that no single reporter can fully master all of specialties related to covering today's military.

If that is true, it may wiser to encourage news organizations to have one reporter who serves as the overall conduit for story ideas that are passed to business, environmental, legal and science reporters when the issues involved overlap with such specialty beats. Given the Defense Department's growing use of industry partnerships, it may be increasingly easier for business reporters to comprehend procurement issues than it would be for an all-purpose military specialist.

The next chapter will offer some recommendations for possible pilot programs based on the findings. Such programs could be field tested like the science writing seminars to provide further evidence on the relationship between training and improved levels of performance. Feedback from students participating in these programs could be collected to measure the utility of the topics offered.

Chapter 7

RECOMMENDATIONS

While previous studies have supported the need for professional training to help journalists understand the complexities of the military, their recommendations as to how to accomplish such training have been too vague or too impractical. While the efforts of the National War College and Boston University are encouraging, the data indicates that more needs to be done at the organizational and association level to provide shorter alternatives for journalists who cannot be spared by their organizations for training that lasts a semester or more in length. Military public affairs professionals and members of Boston University's Center for Defense Journalism have observed that journalists themselves would like to take advantage of training opportunities to learn more about the forces they cover. The difficulty, according to these sources, is in getting editors and news directors to agree to time spent learning that does not provide copy for that day's news product.

As previously mentioned, many editors feel that all a reporter needs is good basic reporting skills to do a credible job at covering most beats. Hopefully, the responses supporting the value of preparatory training from those thrust into the beat will help more editors support the need for preparatory training.

Most of the non-veteran journalists trained through their organizations reported receiving on-the job style training. At a minimum, editors and news directors who offer such training are encouraged to continue to do so, but the results of this study demonstrate the need to regularly seek input from the reporters trained to evaluate the quality of the program. They are also encouraged to monitor the types of errors most

often made by reporters on their military beat to make regular revisions to training materials. Such data can be compared against the ratings provided by journalists assessing the topics they feel are important for training programs to see if there are areas where reporters are unaware of the need for improvement.

Organizations should also strive to ensure they are helping their military reporters by gathering the types of reference data and contacts suggested by Lovell and Campbell to support the military reporter. Kennedy recommends military reporters have access to publications like the U.S. Naval Institute's *Proceedings*, which he contends "is far and away the premier U.S. professional military journal, albeit with obvious limitations in that it presents almost exclusively a Navy and Marine Corps point of view." He describes Air Force magazine as the journal of the Air Force Association, "built on heavy aviation and space industry support..." He also believe that the magazine treads very carefully around the interests of its industrial patrons. Kennedy credits a succession of first-rate editors for giving the *Army Times* standing over other quasi-official publications focused on the Army. The *Armed Forces Journal International* has become oriented toward international military sales, but he believes that it still presents articles of importance to U.S. defense policy and national strategy by competent authors.[99]

The Society of Professional Journalists and the Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication could help with training by using their influence to promote membership in a Military Writers Association that would serve defense journalists nationwide. The previous literature shows that such an association has been helpful for science writers and improved their rapport with researchers and medical professionals.

A military writers association could partner with Boston University's Center for Defense Journalism to provide guidance for organizational training programs. At the very least, the Center offers a monthly publication entitled *Defense Media Review* that could be used as a training tool to follow trends in defense issues. It could also be used to promote basic workshops for working journalists as well as specialized forums.

A 1989 seminar on "Reporting Technology Advances" brought together journalists, government officials, public affairs specialists and defense industry representatives and students for discussions how reporters worked to decipher complex information while industry and government officials attempt to get their messages published.[100] Such gatherings are comparable to the seminars held by science writers and offer exceptional training to help improve the average journalist's understanding of defense issues and would probably be easier for them to attend.

The ratings offered by the journalists in this study could help design regional seminars for working journalists. These seminars could offer handouts to help explain simple matters such as rank insignia along with brief overviews of each military service. Class time could be devoted to the more complicated matters, such as how various military staffs are organized, basic military tactics, and where to find information on weapons and equipment. There could also be classes offered on where to find sources for assistance in analyzing budget, procurement and statistical issues about the military. Time should be reserved for open forum discussion on problems journalists are facing to allow for the exchange of ideas in how to overcome them. Questions from participants could also help expose areas that should have been included and discourage repeats of the areas that may have been unnecessary.

Seminars for students could be held during the summer when there are typically major exercises being conducted across the United States by active duty and reserve

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[99]Kennedy, 75.

[100] "News from the Center," Defense Media Review (Boston, Mass: Center for Defense Journalism, May 1989), 7.

forces. Such an approach would be similar to the way Michigan State University students travel to England and Scotland to learn the challenges of reporting abroad. Military exercises often culminate in several days of major combat-style maneuvers that would offer students the chance to see a wide variety of operations in a short time and practice reporting upon them. As a practical matter, the previous literature shows that it may be far easier for a student who wants to spend time in the field getting to know the military to so during a scholastic career instead of trying to find the time as a professional, especially if the person has several additional beats.

Students participating could have their assignments critiqued for accuracy by military public affairs officers. This would give students an opportunity to see how much they learned and where they still need work. The feedback from participants in the weekend and the student seminars could provide the additional data to help validate the areas that needed to be included in longer, formal classes like the Boston University course. Spreading the course across the country should also make the training more accessible to those who cannot afford the time or funds to study in Boston.

The Directorate for Defense Information in the Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Public Affairs could be helpful in supporting such seminars. Working with the unified commands, they could help provide panel members to help answer questions during the open forums. They might also be able to help with transportation of media and students to exercises using military aircraft and vessels.

The Directorate should also consider sponsoring informational booths at professional gatherings such as the national conventions for the Society for Professional Journalists and the Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication. Similar appearances at gatherings for the Society of Environmental Journalists or other specialized reporting groups could help journalists in other beats help the defense beat reporter by showing how the military compares with other areas of the government and

the private sector when it comes to such hazardous waste disposal, procurement or education.

Such added expertise would help media organizations provide broader, more thorough coverage of the military without being overly dependent on one or two reporters to know everything about how today's military functions. It would also address Wilson's criticism that training for journalist is not as "regularly established" as it is for business professionals.[101]

Just as medical professionals are encouraged to regularly meet with reporters, attendance at such professional gathering would foster ongoing dialogues between both sides that would be helpful. Journalists could gain information on the latest public information tools available to them such as the Defense Department's Defenselink page on the World Wide Web which offers the latest press release, briefing transcripts and fact files on military equipment.

The Center for Defense Journalism also offers its own page on the Internet, but some of its contents does not appear to be as well maintained as the government's page. This is probably due to the higher manpower and funding that the federal government has made available for public information programs on the Internet. A professional organization devoted to military reporters could help raise funds to pay for additional manpower and the computer resources needed to provide timely, up-to-date information on defense issues and the quality of military coverage.

A professional group also could help expand the web site with an on-line guide for military correspondents similar to the one sponsored by the NASW for use by science writers. An experienced military correspondent tried to publish such a guide while on a fellowship at the Center for Defense Journalism but could not find a publisher who felt there was enough interest. An on-line guide would not only fill that void, but it also could provide usage data to more accurately assess the demand for such a reference. The

[101] Aukofer and Lawrence, 172.

organization would also be helpful in promoting the type of regional training sessions discussed earlier.

Chapter 8

CONCLUSION

This study has shown that many of the past trends noted about defense journalists still tend to prevail. Most are male, in their forties, and many felt they were assigned for their abilities as general assignment reporters or because of a personal interest in military topics.

They seem comparable with reporters in other beats, differing mainly in their more rapid degree of confidence in pursuing enterprise stories. This could well be explained by the higher degree of overall journalism experience found among the Pentagon level media, and the fact that many of the local aspects of military coverage are similar to covering general assignment news in a small community. Military installations are often thought of as communities within a community -- each with its own human interest and quality of life issues. In such a context, journalists may perceive their new role as defense journalists as being that much different than the duties they had covering city government. Future researchers need to conduct interviews and perform content analysis comparisons of the assessments provided by journalists and their military coverage to see if the degree of confidence expressed after a short time on the beat is matched by the quality of their stories.

The chief concerns of defense journalists about the beat seem to regard the amount of control exercised by public affairs officers over access to key sources and the unwillingness of less knowledgeable colleagues to become more informed. Military officers have spent a great deal of training time since Grenada, Panama and the Persian Gulf, trying to improve their media relations skills. But apparently there is still not enough openness by the military to satisfy journalists. The answer may lie in the fact that those trying to answer the media's requests for information are often limited by policies and guidelines beyond their control. Journalists should begin tracking the nature of the

requests that are turned down or that are slow to resolve so that trends may begin to emerge that will help clarify where the problem lies.

As for the willingness of colleagues to seek training, it is hoped that the recommendations offered in this study will result in the growth of available opportunities that are more practical for the amount of time that individual reporters can spare. Not all journalists have the ability to take prolonged periods of absence for formal schools. Even correspondence courses can be a problem if they are too detailed and consume too much of the little free time a working journalist usually has available.

Part of the challenge to future researchers in meeting this need is the diversity among the interests selected by those trying to identifying the most important topic to teach new journalists on the beat. Still, those faced with the challenge of pursuing military stories with little or no preparatory training did agree that new initiates to the beat should benefit from some type of preparatory training. Given the speed with which new contingencies arise, it is inconceivable that media managers should take for granted that their reporters will have enough time to learn as they go before they must cover complex operations and make their reports understandable to a civilian populace equally inexperienced in martial subjects.

The recommendations offered in this study provide a variety of training opportunities that should help prepare a new journalist to know what to look for when heading out for that first military assignment. Adopting such programs could help editors prepare a reporter who may be assigned to the beat one week and deployed oversees to a peacekeeping or humanitarian operation the next week. In such cases, training may help a journalist overcome his or her lack of experience on the beat and be ready to cover tougher stories sooner than someone learning on their own.

The reporter would at least know where to readily find information to properly identify equipment and vehicles, what staff officer is most likely to have the information

needed for a story on a particular aspect of the operation and what questions the source will likely be able to answer and which will most likely be classified.

As Australian General Peter Gration said:

"It is not good enough that any cub reporter can roam unrestricted around a theatre of operations understanding little of what he sees, but nevertheless turning out copy that will be read or viewed by someone ... Some process of education on both sides would help."[102]

The press serves a valuable interest to the reader or viewer who cannot accompany the media and observe firsthand how their loved ones are treated, how valuable assets are being used and the effectiveness of the tactics employed. If the coverage of these matters is shallow or inaccurate, the public is less capable of exercising the informed consent envisioned by Jefferson and the other founding fathers. Therefore, journalists must do all they can to preserve the quality of their reporting on the military if they are to fulfill their intended role in the democratic process.

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[102] Gration, 21.

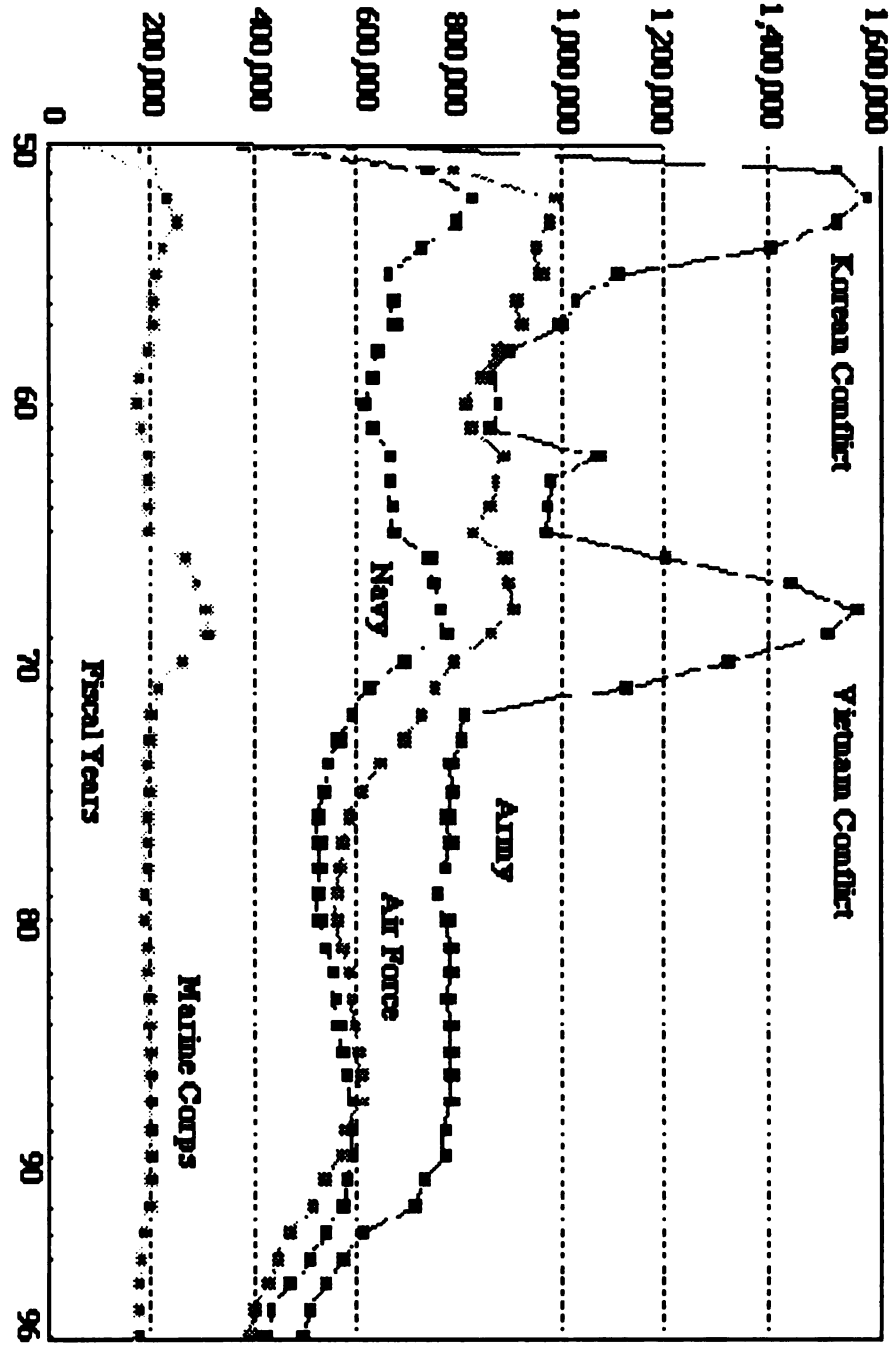
APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

Strength Figures for U.S. Armed Forces from 1950 to 1996

APPENDIX A

Figure 2 Strength Figures for U.S. Armed Forces From 1950 to 1996
(Source: Department of Defense)



APPENDIX B

Sample Letter Sent to Public Affairs Offices Seeking Contact Names

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Sample Letter Sent to Public Affairs Offices Seeking Contact Names

Mar. 22, 1997

Public Affairs Office
Marine Corps Logistics Base
Barstow, CA 92311-5001

Dear Sir,

I am writing to seek your help in identifying the media that normally cover the military in your area. I am seeking this information to support my graduate research toward a proposed training program to assist reporters in becoming more familiar with the military. There have been numerous works suggesting the need to send reporters who are knowledgeable about the military to cover contingency operations, but there does not seem to be any scholarly research proposing exactly how to ensure experienced journalists will be available.

The statistical validity of this research would be greatly enhanced if your office could provide the names and affiliations of journalists that have repeatedly covered your operations. Having actual names of journalists will increase the odds that the surveys being distributed for this research will reach those most likely to respond with pertinent information.

As a Reserve PAO myself, I hope you will see the value of this research and support this request. Similar studies have improved the quality of reporting in science and other specialty fields and should hopefully do the same for military coverage. Please forward whatever information you can to:

Tim Hoyle
10482 Bell Rd.
Clarksville, MI 48815

Information can also be sent by email to hoyletim@pilot.msu.edu. Faxes may be sent to (616) 693-7410.

Sincerely,

Tim Hoyle
Project Coordinator

School of Journalism • Michigan State University • East Lansing, MI 48824-1212 • 517/353-6430 • Fax 517/355-7710
E-mail: JSchool@pilot.msu.edu • WWW: http://www.journalism.msu.edu/j-school.html

APPENDIX C

Sample Questionnaire Sent to Military Writers

APPENDIX C

Sample Questionnaire Sent to Military Writers

Dear Military Writer:

Your help is needed in addressing the issue of how journalists can better cover the U.S. Armed Forces. There have been many forums, panels and studies that have recommended journalists obtain training before they cover the military, but no one has identified any specific curriculum. A 1995 Freedom Forum study, for example, suggested that journalism schools at universities with ROTC programs offer an interdisciplinary program to teach future journalists about the military. These ROTC programs, however, are geared to individual services and may not be adequate to prepare students to cover the military in general.

Therefore, this study was designed to obtain information from professionals who have covered the military to identify what areas of instruction might best prepare those journalists newly assigned to covering military matters. By obtaining information on possible problem areas for journalists new to military coverage, a curriculum can be recommended to reduce the errors and misunderstandings between journalists and military personnel.

The information obtained during this survey will be handled with complete confidentiality. The identification numbers on the questionnaire will be used to prevent wasting your time and research funds by mailing follow-up questionnaires to you after you have already responded. No specific information about you or your media organization will be released. All records correlating identification numbers on questionnaires to individuals will be destroyed at the completion of this study.

Please answer each item as fully as possible. Feel free to attach any additional sheets necessary to provide comments on areas you feel are pertinent to this subject but not addressed in the questions. A postage-paid return envelope is included for your convenience.

I can be reached at (616) 693-2951 or at hoylctim@pilot.msu.edu if you have any questions. Your participation will be greatly appreciated.

Sincerely,

Tim Hoyle
Project Coordinator

School of Journalism * Michigan State University * 305 Communication Arts * East Lansing, MI 48824-1212
Phone: (517) 353-6430 * Fax: (517) 355-7710

Questionnaire

1. How did you become specialized in covering military related stories? (Please circle the number that most closely matches your assessment.)

(1) Assigned because of ability at general assignment stories
(2) Assigned because of previous military experience
(3) Volunteered to develop skills as a beat reporter
(4) Volunteered because of personal interest in military subjects
(5) Not sure how I was chosen
(6) Other (Please explain) _____

_____

2. If you were selected for the military beat because of prior military experience, how many years did you serve? _____ (Please write in the number of years.)

For questions 3 & 4: Veterans of the Armed Forces should answer Question 3 and skip Question 4. Those without military service should skip Question 3 and answer Question 4.

---

3. If you were a veteran (someone who served on active duty or in the reserve forces of one of the Armed Forces) before reporting on the military, how helpful was your experience to your ability to understand and more thoroughly report upon the issues in your stories? (Please circle the number that most closely matches your assessment.)

(1) very helpful (2) somewhat helpful (3) not sure

(4) would not have helped very much (5) would not have helped at all

4. If you were not a veteran before you began reporting on military subjects, how helpful would it have been to have received instruction on the Armed Forces? (Please circle the number that most closely matches your assessment.)

(1) very helpful (2) somewhat helpful (3) not sure

(4) did not help very much (5) did not help at all

5. Which type of training or assistance did your media organization provide to help prepare you to cover the military? (Please mark next to the training received, if any)

_____ On-the-job training with journalist previously covering the military beat
_____ Background notes on military prepared by journalist previously covering the military beat
_____ Other (please explain) _____

_____

_____ No special training provided

If you received training designed to help you cover the military, please answer Question 6. If not, please skip it and go on to Question 7.

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6. How effective was your media organization's training at preparing you to cover the military? (Please circle the number that most closely matches your assessment.)

(1) very effective (2) somewhat effective (3) not sure

(4) not very effective (5) not effective at all

7. How long were you assigned to the military beat before you felt informed enough to develop sources and story ideas on your own? (Please circle the number that most closely matches your assessment.)

(a) one month (b) two months to three months (c) four to six months

(d) more than six months (e) Not sure

8. In the average assignment, how many sources are you able to identify besides official military spokesmen or experts offered through the public affairs office? (Please circle the number that most closely matches your assessment.)

(1) 1-2 (2) 3-4 (3) 5-6 (4) more than six

9. Using the number 1 as the most often and 7 as the least often, how frequently would you estimate you cover the following assignments? (Please enter your ranking on the line beside each option.)

_____ Stories about equipment
_____ Stories about weapons
_____ Stories about military personnel
_____ Stories about the families of military personnel
_____ Stories about military exercises
_____ Stories about actual military operations (i.e. Haiti, Somalia, Bosnia, etc,)
_____ Other (Please explain) _____

10. Using the number 1 as the most important and 14 as the least important, how would you rate the importance of understanding the following areas before covering the military? (Please enter your ranking on the line beside each option.)

____ Brief history of each service
____ Brief overview of fundamental air, ground and naval tactics
____ Where to find information on weapons and equipment
____ How weapons and equipment are developed and procured
____ What equipment to take to cover units in the field and where to get it
____ Military justice
____ Command and staff structures for each service and major units
____ Joint operations between different armed services
____ Operations with U.N. forces and nations allied with the United States
____ Military supply and logistics
____ Military rank structures for each service
____ Non-traditional uses of the military
____ Legal and policy limitations on the use of the military
____ Other (Please explain)

11. About what percentage of your military stories are initiated by the following sources? (Please enter the percentages in the space next to the option that best matches your assessment. **Percentages should total 100 percent**)

____ Department of Defense or local military press release
____ A source outside the Department of Defense or a local military unit
____ A press release from a defense contractor (i.e. McDonnell Douglas)
____ Civilian organizations monitoring the military (i.e. Brookings Institute, etc.)
____ Your editor
____ Other publications (i.e. newspapers, newsletters, magazines)
____ Broadcast news stories
____ Your initiative
____ Other types of sources (Please explain) _____

_____ _____

12. How many years have you been assigned to the military beat? _____ (Please do not count beat experience where the military aspect of the coverage was incidental — i.e. writing about off-duty service members arrested by the police while serving as a police beat reporter.)

13. How much of each work week is devoted to military related stories? (Please circle the number that most closely matches your assessment.)

(1) 1-20% (2) 21-40% (3) 41-60% (4) 61-80% (5) 81-100%

14. Starting with the number 1 as the most often, please rank the type of military story you cover the most.(Please enter a ranking in the space provided. You may go beyond 4 if multiple entries are made for "Other." If so, please place a number beside each type of story listed in that category.)

_____ National stories affecting all of the services
_____ Stories about local military forces (including local impacts of Pentagon/White House actions)
_____ Stories about defense contractors
_____ Other (Please explain) _____

_____

15. How many other special interest areas or "beats" do you cover? _____ (Please write in the number.)

16. What is your age? _____ (Please write in the number of years.)

17. How long have you been a reporter? _____ (Please write in the number of years.)

18. What is your gender?

(1) Male (2) Female

19. What type of media organization is your employer? (Please circle the appropriate number.)

(1) Magazine
(2) Newsletter
(3) Newspaper
(4) Radio Network
(5) Radio station
(6) Television network
(7) Television station
(8) Wire Service

20. What are your main concerns about the state of reporting of U.S. military operations. Please use the remaining space to write in your comments. You are welcome to attach additional pages if necessary.

June 7, 1997

Dear Editors and News Directors,

I am writing to seek your help in identifying the media that normally cover the military in your area. I am seeking this information to support my graduate research toward a proposed training program to assist reporters in becoming more familiar with the military. There have been numerous works suggesting the need to send reporters who are knowledgeable about the military to cover contingency operations, but there does not seem to be any scholarly research proposing exactly how to ensure experienced journalists will be available.

Please ask the person who is assigned to the military beat to complete the survey enclosed. If you do not have a military beat, please ask the person most often assigned to report military stories to complete the form. A return envelope has been provided for the respondent's convenience. Respondents do need to provide their names. All respondents may rest assured that their individual answers will be treated with strict confidentiality. No individual journalists or news organizations will be identified in the findings.

Please send any questions you have about this survey by email to hoyletim@pilot.msu.edu. Faxes may be sent to (616) 961-7410.

Sincerely,

Tim Hoyle

Tim Hoyle
Project Coordinator

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Sample cover letter sent to editors and news dirctors

APPENDIX D

Comments Submitted By Military Writers About The Beat

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Comments Submitted By Military Writers About The Beat

The last question in the questionnaire sent to military writers solicited their main concerns about the state of reporting of U.S. military operations. Not everyone who responded to the questionnaire answered this question, therefore, the responses shown will be lower than the overall return rate. But for those who did respond to this open invitation, their unedited responses are provided to give future researchers a more first hand account of the concerns submitted.

1. The following topics were listed as "all equal concerns" by the respondent:
    - "Gotcha" journalism
    - Inexperience of reporters
    - Knee jerk reactions to current events
    - Lack of a gaze into future issues

Lack of relationship between DoD, White House, State, intelligence community, Treasury, Justice, etc. -- in stories, half or partial pictures of issues

2. Continuing decline in credibility of others, non-beat assigned reporters and videographers covering the military here. This often stems from lack of knowledge, specialized training and interest in the beat. Often stories get bogged down in "officialese," focus on weapons systems, or strategic policies and do not focus on the people they affect; the troops, families and American public. And, the decline in free access to stories, issues and information from local units deployed internationally.

3. Accuracy

4. The military needs to be more open with reporters. Stop thinking of everything as a positive or negative story.

5. I find few media people devoted to military coverage -- TV sends a kid who doesn't know a Harrier from a carrier, or a corporal from a colonel, to cover an event The military tends to respect one who has done some homework, observes a semblance of military protocol, and is not a hazard to themselves or others in the field, on a boat, in an aircraft. I write features not breaking stories.

6. I think journalists have to work hard to overcome the handicap of working through public affairs, whose only job is to make their service look good. For the most part, they are obstructionists. If news is to be fair, accurate and impartial, a reporter has to develop sources and not be spoon fed or shackled by PAOs.

7. We don't do nearly enough of it -- especially as it regards the economic and social impacts on our market area -- There are fewer and fewer journalists with actual military experience, and that shows up in increasingly inaccurate or slanted coverage.

8. Lack of knowledge or interest of media to learn nitty-gritty of military. Most military coverage focuses on things happening at the Pentagon without checking with people at units elsewhere.

9. Having worked on both sides of the fence, I have a deep concern about news organizations assigning people with absolutely no prior contact with the military to cover the military beat. The issues involved are so complicated that it is very easy to make mistakes. I would suggest that anyone covering the military for the first time contact the local installation's public affairs office. Most are happy to arrange a tour and a briefings to orient the reporter on history and local issues as they affect the community. Other than that, the only way to pick it up is through constant contact and personal research.

10. The following bullets were submitted by the respondent:

- Confirmed and accurate information
- Speed in accessing information
- Interviews with the source of the story.

11. Too many people with too little knowledge of the subjects about which they are writing. Also, too few editors with knowledge of the military.

12. Being able to talk to anyone but the PAO officer. Having access to the commanding general or other staff blocked. Units each having different policies regarding the media. Military medical units having no knowledge of existing practice/law (not knowing what is/is not releasable.)

13. Journalists who do not cover military issues on a regular basis routinely jump to inaccurate conclusions about "headline" stories -- particularly issues such as gender relations in the military -- without being fair in their reporting about the military's side of the story.

14. Biggest problem is misleading spinning by officials, or flat out lies. DoD also often makes it very difficult to attain mundane information.

15. Very few reporters have any personal military experience and reporters assigned to military stories do not take the time, or are not given the time, to become familiar with the services, their culture, organization, how and why they do what they do. This is aggravate d by the fact that most members of Congress and people in the think tanks are similarly ignorant. As a result, stories are lacking in perspective, frequently wrong in fact and often slanted because of an anti-military bias. News organizations increasingly do not want coverage of the military except in the scandals, accidents or major procurement problems. This further distorts the public's perception of the military.

16. Many colleagues cover the military from Washington -- covering press conferences, hearings and briefings. That's OK, but it leaves them without an understanding of field operations, which shows up during times like Desert Storm/Bosnia. I believe no special training is required of journalists -- only that they spend time in the field writing stories.

17. A key concern is all the media (national and international) the military will try to deal with during operations. My concern is the military will try to deal with all and forget to give extra attention to the U.S. networks and CNN.

18. Reporters can go overboard on things like the sex scandal. There is no sense of proportion.

19. The following bullets were submitted:

- Diminishing experience interest
- Tight travel budgets
- Uncooperative military

20. The pack at the Tuesday/Thursday Pentagon briefing is growing. (The Directorate of Defense Information holds a press briefing every Tuesday and Thursday to offer information on items the Defense Department is required to announce or considers newsworthy.) Too many reporters are becoming spoon-fed there and on the Hill. Too few think for themselves.

21. Understanding the uses of the military and how budgets pay for more than weapons. Military people, soldiers and family members as "the services."

22. Much the same as in other subject areas: pack journalism and failure to understand fundamental structure. The pack doesn't dig deep enough, which perpetuates falsehoods (the coverage of the Ralston-Flinn scandals for the most part failed to note that Ralston continued his affair after reconciliation with his wife); Fundamental structure misunderstandings generally abound during war. But with so few reporters specializing in the military, stories that confuse brigades with battalions will always be with us.

23. Still find the public affairs staff's info control attitude frustrating. As a relatively small, niche publication, we are often at their mercy. In other words, if we piss them off, we get reduced cooperation on later stories.

24. The focus has shifted from the military services, weapons and other hardware to social policy. It doesn't seem to be much of a military beat. The debate over MX or Midgetman missile has been replaced by gays in the military and adultery by senior officers.

25. The dailies, other than the *Washington Times*, tend to sit back on their heels and wait

to react to statements by defense secretary, members of Congress or others. I don't buy into complaints about reporters' lack of knowledge though. If anything, press corps tends to be coopted. Most defense reporters tend to be almost hawkish.

26. The number of qualified military journalists has declined as many major publications have eliminated this as a prime beat. Thus the quality of coverage has declined.

27. The following bullets were submitted:

- Fairness and accuracy
- The military/DoD is a very complex organization made up of arcane structures and processes. It can be very difficult to grasp what can and cannot be done -- to develop the DoD budget, to acquire weapons, to create a defense strategy, to sell weapons overseas and to prepare an operation (and then execute it).
- The weapons technology is complicated and many reporters are overwhelmed by it and fall either into the of automatically being "wowed" by it or being automatically critical. Healthy skepticism and objectivity are required.

28. The competence of reporters.

29. I think rapport is especially important when covering the military. I think the average soldier doesn't trust the media because he/she doesn't really know what we do. The public information office here conducts "media on the battlefield" training to get soldiers accustomed to talking reporters and I believe this training helps some. The most difficult part of reporting on the military is having to go through the public affairs or public information office. PAOs can be helpful, but you often have to wait for your expert or source to find time for you. It's difficult to find people to talk to you without going through the PAO because most will tell you to go back to the PAO.

30. The liberal national press -- particularly TV.

APPENDIX E

Sample Article Solicited By Hometown Media

APPENDIX E

Sample Article Solicited By Hometown Media

THE MILFORD TIMES—Thursday, March 14, 1991—11A

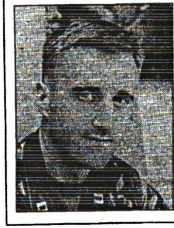
The 'mother of all battles' ended in surreal fashion

EDITOR'S NOTE: U.S. Marine Corps Cpl. Timothy Hoyle, a 1975 graduate of Milford High School, has been serving in Saudi Arabia since Aug. 15, 1990.

In Hoyle's first letter to this newspaper, printed Feb. 14, he described the sights and sounds of the Persian Gulf during the months prior to the beginning of Operation Desert Storm.

In this missive, Hoyle gives a first-hand account of the ground war which began Feb. 22 and ended Feb. 28.

His mother, Jean Hoyle of Highland, reports that Hoyle shipped back to his home base at Twentynine Palms, Calif. last Saturday, March 9.



"By mid-afternoon we had reached the outskirts of the city and waited to enter the airport. Jubilant Kuwaities drove past our convoy, waving flags and honking horns."

Timothy Hoyle
U.S. Marine Corps

continued on next page

Saudi Arabia, March 5, 1991: After months of preparation and pondering all of the possibilities, it is almost surreal that "the mother of all battles" we were promised is over so soon after it started.

We were certainly expecting a more difficult time on Feb. 22 when the 3rd Marine Regiment slipped over the Kuwait border under the cover of darkness.

The media group I was escorting was able to accompany them as the liberation of Kuwait began. We spent the rest of the night evading Iraqi patrols as we worked our way eight miles into enemy territory.

Shortly before dawn on Feb. 23, we reached our attack position. From there we would prepare to infiltrate the Iraqi defensive belt to secure a breach for mechanized forces to attack through. We dug shallow holes to sleep in for a few hours before the final preparations began.

That afternoon we reviewed the plans for the infiltration. Company I of 3rd Battalion, 3rd Marines would slip through the mines and provide covering fire for the rest of the battalion as it followed their tracks through the obstacle.

The Marines seemed more than ready to go. The only unknown was whether Saddam Hussein would comply with the President's last deadline — the time earmarked for us to move out for the attack.

When Iraq failed to comply, we began our night movement toward the mines. We traveled lightly to conserve our strength and cut down on the dehydrating effects of the chemical protective suits we wore as a precaution.

The suits kept us warm during the cold desert night. Our only problem was during halts when the wind would chill the sweat under the suit. I never thought I'd lay in a desert and listen to my teeth chatter.

After seven kilometers, we made our last halt near the minefield. We could see the flame of a fire lighting the road into the Al Wafrah oilfield. We believed that the Iraqi forces used the fire to watch the area. Securing this road was a key objective to provide vehicles a safe passage through the minefield.

After a final reconnaissance of the area, it was learned the enemy we expected to be there had departed. Seizing the opportunity, we moved through the minefield together, instead of the previous plan calling for a platoon at a time.

After all we had heard about the Iraqi army's defensive capabilities, we were amazed at how easy it was to slip through the minefield. The mines were spread way too thin and many lacked fuses. Some of the more sophisticated ones lacked batteries for their sensors.

Sweeping past the mines, we secured positions along the road on the far side and prepared for any attempts by the enemy to return. Our trek to the area had taken most of the night because of the need for stealth to protect the element of surprise. The sun began to rise shortly after we began digging our fighting positions and mechanized forces began to move up.

As the sun rose we could see where the enemy bunkers were. Either the enemy had filled them in or they were abandoned for a long time and the winds had blown back in them. It was incredible to realize that we had penetrated the first defenisve belt without a casualty.

Later that day we moved into the workers camp built to house Al Wafrah's employees and their families. The buildings had been stripped of anything useful, even light fixtures, but still gave us some shelter from the rain.

The next afternoon gave us our first chance to witness how poor the morale was in Iraq's forces. A column of tanks arrived at our outer defenses and stopped. Uncertain of their intentions, 3rd Battalion's heavy weapons teams approached cautiously. After the fake surrender attempts at Khafji, we were not taking any chances.

Soon a small group of Iraqi tank crewmen came forward with their hands in the air. They seemd smaller than I expected and not the least bit ferocious. Their helmets were plastic and their uniforms cheaply made.

Once the initial group had demonstrated it was safe, their comrades came filing out from their tanks. A mechanized force on our left flank had come forward by this time and took the remainder of the tank crews prisoner.

Meanwhile, other Iraqi prisoners had come forward on our right flank. As Marines encouraged them to keep coming, Iraqi mortars began firing on their countrymen to keep them from surrendering.

Despite the flying shrapnel, the prisoners kept coming and were soon in U.S. custody. With those from the tank column, the unit had taken almost 200 prisoners without firing a shot.

The next day we prepared to move north again. By now we were aware that Iraq was taking heavy losses and expected to be in Kuwait City soon.

On the morning of Feb. 28, we began moving by truck toward Kuwait City. Our route took us through the oil field fire and provided an incredible experience. The thick, black smoke from the burning wells had veiled the desert sky so that mid-morning was darker than any midnight. Even with the vehicle headlights, it was difficult to see more than 100 yards.

Later in Kuwait City, Maj. Gen. Mike Myatt, commanding general of the 1st Marine Division, would relate how the fires helped them sneak up on Iraqi tanks and knock them out before they knew what hit them. Their disabled hulks could be seen lying in their revetments as we passed through the now quiet battlefield.

By mid-afternoon we had reached the outskirts of the city and waited to enter the airport. Jubilant Kuwaities drove past our convoy, waving flags and honking horns.

One man stopped his vehicle when he saw the TV crew with our group. He wanted the chance to tell the world of the 31 relatives he had lost under Iraqi occupation.

"Where is his mother? Where is his father?" he asked. Holding up his thumb and forefinger, the man mimicked the pistol he would like to use for revenge on Saddam's family.

Soon, the 3rd Marine Regiment was moving again and occupied the northeast corner of the airfield. Despite the battle to secure the field, most of the runways looked in good shape. Many of the buildings seemed usable. Some of them became command posts for units arriving at the field. Much of the damage looked like it had been done by Iraqi forces intentionally.

With the news of the cease fire, our media pool quickly disbanded and began joining their colleagues inside the city. Several networks were already broadcasting live and journalists were streaming in as fast as the military.

Driving through the city with NBC-TV, it was amazing to see how much of the city was intact. Except for the scattered bunkers and destroyed vehicles, it was hard in most places to tell there had been a conflict here.

Kuwaiti people were out in force, reclaiming those streets and searching for Palestinians and the few Iraqi soldiers left behind. Servicemen received hugs from a grateful populace and heard cries of "USA" and cheers for President Bush.

It made me remember the words of an Egyptian friend I made in Dammam. He told me that this is the first time the Arab world has had the chance to see the United States as a friend and an ally.

Hopefully, we will remain friends. The only certainty is that servicemen and women are ready to return home to their families and take advantage of something they haven't known for a while — time off.

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