

Appendix B

Media Relations

Military operations are carried out, especially in the initial phases, under the full glare of public scrutiny. The press can distribute reports and pictures faster than the news can be released by the command by using satellites and modern communications technology. Incidents, sometimes embroidered or slanted towards a partisan viewpoint, are screened on the television the same day and in the countries that are parties to the dispute and their allies.

OVERVIEW

B-1. Journalists fall back on speculation when information is withheld. Such speculation, although usually inaccurate, is often near enough to the truth to be accepted as such by large sections of the public and even by the governments. Belligerents find it advantageous to leak part of a story to the press to build public support for their position. On occasion, such activities can grow into a fully orchestrated press campaign.

MEDIA INTERACTION

B-2. Establish procedures for media interaction and incorporate them into SOPs. Know what (such as a simple theme which they can tie their responses back to) to discuss with the media and what to refer to the PAO. Ensure that deploying units receive a predeployment briefing from the installation PAO to clarify what may

or may not be discussed with the media. Ensure that this action occurs before any exposure to the media. Do not make off-the-record statements in briefings or discussions with the media. Public or media knowledge of any classified activity associated with an operation does not imply or mean that the information is unclassified or may be released or confirmed.

B-3. Ensure that MP are courteous, respond candidly, speak effectively, and continue the mission when interacting with broadcast and print reporters and photographers. This relationship with the media prevents any misgivings. The media will report more accurately and not feel that information is being withheld. The media provides its audiences with real-time information of varying accuracy and completeness.

B-4. The media can be a valuable tool or a lost asset during military operations. It can potentially have a quick and pervasive impact on the plans and operations of commanders, and can change the public's opinions and perceptions about military operations. It can target audiences whose support is crucial to the desired end state of an operation. MP may be the centerpiece for humanitarian assistance or during operations to relieve suffering. A reporter or a photographer may show up at a checkpoint or a TCP where local nationals (belligerents) are refusing to cooperate. Ensure that the media is not only documenting the activities and behavior of the belligerents, but is also recording the military's response to the incident.