

# THE NEXT WAR: LIVE?

by

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## INTRODUCTION

"Live" coverage is no longer a technological marvel, though networks still rush to superimpose the word "live" over their coverage of a Presidential news conference, a Congressional hearing or the latest installment of the O.J. Simpson saga. Indeed, "live" coverage has been an option, though at the beginning an awkward and costly one, since the political conventions of 1948 and 1952. Over the years, as cameras have become smaller, satellites more sophisticated, and the world more "digitalized," costs have dropped dramatically, and many news events are now covered "live" routinely—except for the coverage of war. Yet, even here, too, it seems to be only a matter of time before anchors introduce "live" reports from a hot battlefield as matter-of-factly as cut-ins from Washington. And then what?

Barrie Dunsmore, for more than 30 years a fair and fearless diplomatic reporter for ABC News, has spent much of the last year exploring this question. The result is surprising and subtle, as befits a complicated subject handled in a serious manner.

Dunsmore wrote "The Next War: Live?" while a Fellow at the Shorenstein Center on the Press, Politics and Public Policy at Harvard's Kennedy School of Government during the fall semester of the 1995-96 academic year. He read the relevant literature, much of it on the Gulf War; he interviewed 31 key officials and prominent journalists, including Generals Shalikashvili, Powell and Schwarzkopf and TV anchors Brokaw, Jennings, Koppel, Rather and Shaw; and he delved into his own deep reservoir of experience covering wars and diplomacy—all in an effort to understand, on the one side, the journalistic and technological impulses likely to drive "live" coverage of the next conflict and, on the other side, the political and military considerations and constraints.

The generals sound, in this report, as if they have learned a great deal about press relations from both the Vietnam and Gulf wars; the journalists also seem wiser. The lessons are not necessarily the same ones; nor should they be, given the vastly different professional responsibilities of the general and the journalist in a free society. But, in anticipation of the inexorable drift toward "live" coverage from the battlefield, both sides have been struggling to prepare a mutually acceptable set of guidelines in full

recognition that their effort, while sincere and determined, may fail. And so they "negotiate." They say they respect each other's needs. They are sensitive to the awesome power of public opinion in the age of television, faxes, cellular phones and other such miracles of communication. They are aware that any agreement reached in an atmosphere of peace may quickly collapse in the pressures of war.

Neither side has to be reminded that the precedent for "live" coverage of war has been set. Twice already, during the Persian Gulf War of 1990-91, network correspondents reported "live" from the Kuwaiti front—Forrest Sawyer for ABC News and Bob McKeowan for CBS News. It was a costly and cumbersome operation. Each came flanked by six colleagues and an armada of four trucks loaded with more than a ton of technology: a portable ground station with a six-foot-wide satellite dish, a power-producing generator with its own fuel supply, and of course cameras, lights and sound gear. Now, five years later, a network would need only a two-person crew, equipped with a digital camera, a wide-band cellular phone to establish contact with the satellite and a laptop computer to coordinate the transmission—miniaturized machinery weighing no more than 100 pounds and fitting into two cases. And there are so many more networks now than there were then, meaning competitive pressures would be compounded enormously.

Will there be "live" coverage of the next war? Absolutely. The Pentagon is already planning for such an eventuality—in the opinion of senior officials, a very worrisome but probably unavoidable eventuality. "From my position as the Chairman [of the Joint Chiefs of Staff]," said General Shalikashvili to Dunsmore, "the most immediate issue is how live coverage might adversely impact on the safety of the troops..... That's my main concern."

Retired General Powell, no longer in the line of command but attuned as ever to the shifting requirements of public relations, bluntly warned that if his mission were jeopardized by "live" coverage, he would arrest the reporters. "I'd have locked all of you up," he told Dunsmore, "and you could have taken me to every court in the land. And guess who would have won that battle? I mean the American people would have stripped your skin off."

Perhaps, but journalists are acutely mind-

ful of the current wave of popular distrust of the press, and they clearly do not wish to offend their readers, viewers and listeners by reporting on events that might be interpreted as endangering American lives. They too want to be seen as patriots as well as reporters. NBC's Tom Brokaw said: "God, the last thing I want on my personal conscience or my professional resume is that he caused the death of one, say nothing of 100 or 1,000 or 2,000 American lives because in his zeal to get on the air, he spilled secrets."

Dunsmore discovered, interestingly, that journalists are not of one mind about "live" coverage—some, such as Nightline's Koppel, arguing against it; others, such as CBS's Rather, arguing for it.

Koppel said: "... [when] you have a declared war, ... you simply cannot have that coexisting with an unedited rendition of what is going on in the battlefield. ... There just has to be some application of common sense here." He continued: "The essence of journalism lies in the editing process, not in training a camera on an event. That is not journalism." Rather, taking a much more traditional line, sharply disagreed: "Live coverage, when directed and carried out by professional journalists of experience, is journalism and can be very good journalism. I don't agree that it isn't journalism. I don't agree with 'well, it's just television.' Live coverage of the four dark days in Dallas during the Kennedy assassination—that was television. It also was a lot of damn good journalism."

Dunsmore is of the view that "live" reporting in war, not in peacekeeping, is so controversial, potentially so damaging to the national interest, that any administration would be driven to impose severe limitations on such coverage without fear of a public backlash. After all, he concludes, "live" coverage is not protected by the First Amendment, not synonymous with "the public's right to know," and not essential to the "practice of good journalism." Obviously, during war, such a rational set of conclusions may run into the reality of ferociously irrational competition among American and foreign networks that could undermine the best of journalistic intentions.

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## I. INTRODUCTION

IT IS 1999. IN A MOVE REMINISCENT OF HITLER'S PACT WITH STALIN ON THE EVE OF WORLD WAR II, IRAQI PRESIDENT SADDAM HUSSEIN AND THE CLERICS OF IRAN FORM AN UNHOLY ALLIANCE.

IRAQ'S REPUBLICAN GUARD IS SOON ROLLING INTO KUWAIT, WITH IRANIAN AIR SUPPORT, AND IT DOES NOT STOP AT THE BORDER WITH SAUDI ARABIA.

THIS TIME THE GOAL IS NOT ONLY KUWAIT'S OIL FIELDS BUT THE BULK OF SAUDI ARABIA'S OIL RESERVES AS WELL.

THE AMERICAN PRESIDENT FACES THE SAME CHALLENGE PRESIDENT GEORGE BUSH FACED IN 1990, EXCEPT THE STAKES ARE NOW EVEN HIGHER.

THE INDUSTRIALIZED NATIONS WILL NOT TOLERATE HAVING THE LION'S SHARE OF THE WORLD'S OIL SUPPLIES IN THE HOSTILE HANDS OF IRAQ AND IRAN.

THUS, THE SCENE IS SET FOR GULF WAR II.

At first glance, the situation looks much as it did nine years earlier. The issues, the combatants and the battlefields are pretty much the same. But this time, weapons of mass destruction may be used — and importantly for this paper, advanced technology will have changed more than just the weapons of war.

In the first Gulf War, Forrest Sawyer of ABC News and Bob McKeowan of CBS News (with much help from their courageous and enterprising crews), brought us the liberation of Kuwait "live". Sawyer went in with a team of seven. They needed four trucks to carry their equipment: a fly-away portable ground station with six-foot-wide dish, a generator to provide power, a tank truck to carry gasoline to run the generator, a camera, lights and sound equipment — quite literally, well over a ton of stuff.

By Gulf War II, a two-person team will be able to go to war with a digital camera, a wide-band cellular phone to up-link to the satellite, and a laptop computer to coordinate the transmission. The equipment will fit into two cases and weigh about a hundred pounds. "Live from the battlefield" will no longer be primitive and cumbersome. As a technological feat, it will be routine.

## II. OVERVIEW

The possibility of live television coverage from the battlefield raises major security, political and journalistic questions. What are its likely military consequences? Does it actually threaten

operational security? Could it affect or change the outcome of a battle or even the war?

What are its political consequences? What would be the impact of the scenes of carnage on the American people, especially in terms of their support for a given foreign policy or a given war?

Could a mistake in a live broadcast, which cost American lives, cause such a public backlash that people might be willing to sacrifice some democratic freedoms in order to curb the networks?

With so much at risk, should the US military and the four major American networks, negotiate guidelines that would set conditions for live coverage? What might those guidelines be?

This paper is an attempt to answer these questions by addressing them to the key people who have made the coverage decisions in past wars and will decide what we see of wars of the future. For the first time, Generals such as Colin Powell, John Shalikashvili and Norman Schwarzkopf have talked at length of their concerns about live coverage while network anchors Tom Brokaw, Peter Jennings, Ted Koppel, Dan Rather and Bernard Shaw have revealed their feelings about its possible consequences. I have also interviewed battlefield commanders, high-level present and former government officials and senior network news executives. (See Appendix A)

As one would expect, these people hold varying views on the subject, but there was one point on which they were nearly unanimous—live television coverage of future wars is inevitable. It will be done, because it can be done. That does not imply approval. Indeed there are lots of misgivings, including among television people.

Ted Koppel, the anchorman of ABC News Nightline, is one of those adamantly against the very idea of live coverage from the battlefield, when the US is truly at war.

[when] you have a declared war in which the United States of America is engaged presumably for either its survival or the survival of interests — you simply cannot have that co-existing with an unedited rendition of what is going on in the battlefield, knowing full well that everything that is sent out is going to be made available to the enemy.... During a war, there just has to be a certain application of common sense here. The essence of journalism lies in the editing process, not in training a camera on an event. That is not journalism.<sup>1</sup>

Pete Williams, who is now a correspondent for NBC News but is better known for his role as Assistant Secretary of Defense for Public Affairs and Pentagon spokesman during the Gulf War, is more cynical about TV news.

I suppose there are purists who would argue that sending back a live picture isn't journalism.... It may not be journalism, but it is television, and that is a fact of life.<sup>2</sup>

Dan Rather, the anchorman and Managing Editor of the CBS Evening News, takes strong issue with both Koppel and Williams.

Live coverage, when directed and carried out by professional journalists of experience, is journalism and can be very good journalism. I don't agree that it isn't journalism.

I don't agree with "Well it's just television." Live coverage of the four dark days in Dallas during the Kennedy Assassination — that was television. It also was a lot of damn good journalism.<sup>3</sup>

Those of us who were glued to our television sets for those dark days in 1963 would not quarrel with Rather, who played a major role in that coverage. But the issue before us is live television coverage—from the battlefield.<sup>A</sup> And among decision makers, there are obvious differences of opinion about the desirability of such coverage, and more than a little trepidation about its consequences, as this paper will reflect.

The extent of live television coverage from the battlefield is ultimately going to depend on what kind of war and what kind of battlefield.

If it were to be a repeat of the Gulf War, the military would again have near total control of access. The First Amendment guarantees freedom of the press, but there is nothing in the Constitution which compels the military to allow journalists to run free on a battlefield (or to get onto most military bases or even into the Pentagon for that matter).

If, on the other hand, the action was in circumstances similar to Haiti, where several hundred journalists were already on the scene with live cameras poised to bring you "The

American Invasion-Live," the US military would have much less control over what got on the air.

In terms of its ability to control access, the Pentagon appears to believe that its operations in the foreseeable future are more likely to follow the Haitian rather than the Gulf model.

And General John Shalikashvili, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff and his military planners, are already calculating the impact of live coverage as a potential threat to operational security.

Any kind of involvement of US military forces, whether it's for the most benign assistance in a humanitarian operation here or abroad, to an all out war ... they all seem to be newsworthy so there will be live coverage.

From my position as the Chairman, the most immediate issue is how live coverage might adversely impact on the safety of troops and the security of this and on future operations. That's my main concern.<sup>4</sup>

It is important to note that operational security and the safety of US troops are also concerns of network journalists and executives. Tom Brokaw, the anchorman and Managing Editor of NBC Nightly News is very sensitive to the problem.

We will bring to bear on our judgements all the experiences that we've had and we'll err on the side of caution rather than on recklessness.

God, the last thing I want on my personal conscience or my professional resume is that he caused the death of one, say nothing of 100 or 1,000 or 2,000 American lives because in his zeal to get on the air, he spilled secrets.<sup>5</sup>

Actually there is more common ground among military, government and television news people on the subject of live coverage than I expected to find. Part of this can be attributed to people telling me what they think I wanted to hear. But I believe that much of it was genuine.<sup>B</sup>

This is consistent with a major poll, published in September 1995 by the Freedom Forum First

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<sup>A</sup> What is or is not journalism may seem like an academic debate among journalists with no practical meaning to outsiders. However, when it is being debated by a Dan Rather or a Ted Koppel, it does have a practical implication because both men have enormous influence over what is or is not seen on CBS or ABC news programs.

<sup>B</sup> For the most part, the interviewees are either friends, acquaintances or people with whom I have had professional contact over a period of time. After four decades as a reporter I feel confident that I can tell when someone I know is dissembling.

Amendment Center. The survey went to more than 2,000 military officers and 351 selected news media members who had been or were likely to be involved in covering military operations.

Among its more encouraging findings: 82% of the military agreed with the statement, "The news media are just as necessary to maintaining US freedom as the military." And 93% of the news media disagreed with the statement, "Members of the military are more interested in their own image than in the good of the country."

But some old points of tension die hard. Sixty-four percent of the military officers still believe strongly, or somewhat strongly, that news media coverage of events in Vietnam harmed the war effort.<sup>C</sup>

The good news, however, is that the so-called Vietnam Syndrome, while not dead, is becoming less evident among top officers and public affairs people in the Pentagon.

White House Press Secretary Michael McCurry says the Pentagon people he deals with are in full agreement with a policy of openness.

This President and this administration have said we ought to have user-friendly rules for the press when it comes to coverage of military action. We need the support of the American people.... And much to my delight—the public affairs professionals I've worked with at the Pentagon—that is basically their attitude too. They have very sophisticated people doing public affairs activities there now.<sup>7</sup>

This sense that military attitudes are changing in the Pentagon is shared by David Gergen, who handled communications for President Ronald Reagan and as an advisor to President Bill Clinton oversaw negotiations for television coverage of the Haiti landings.

I'm much more optimistic than I was ten years ago. Certainly, having gone through the experience of Grenada and then going through it again on Haiti, I thought both sides were much more enlightened about the needs of the other side.

In Grenada ten years ago, the Vietnam Syndrome was still very strong in the military and the distrust of the press was very strong.<sup>8</sup>

Actually, it is not the Vietnam War but the Gulf War, which is the source of most of the current friction between the media and the military. A great deal has been written on the subject which need not be repeated in detail here.<sup>D</sup> But as attitudes toward future coverage will have been shaped, in part, by the Gulf experience, it bears mentioning.

In a review of Gulf War coverage, a group of Washington bureau chiefs representing major news organizations concluded that:

The combination of security review and the use of the pool system as a form of censorship made the Gulf War the most uncovered major conflict in modern American history.<sup>9</sup>

While this may seem to some as an overstatement, very few people remember that the ground war lasted only 100 hours and the coverage of that was very sparse. Many Americans were left with the impression that the Marines liberated Kuwait, because the Marines encouraged news coverage. Actually the Marine role was minor compared to the Seventh Army Corps which did most of the fighting, but as it shunned reporters it got much less coverage or credit.

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<sup>C</sup> Polls are often skewed when respondents say what they think they should say rather than what they really feel. This should be taken into account when reading polls about how the military feels about the media and vice-versa. My experience has been that there are very few senior officers who served in Vietnam, who do not feel a degree of antipathy toward journalists. And most journalists who covered Vietnam remain highly suspicious of the Pentagon.

<sup>D</sup> As noted in the bibliography, there are numerous books and studies done in the wake of the Gulf War which were reviewed in the preparation of this paper. The Powell and the Schwarzkopf memoirs devote substantial space to how the war was won and a little to relations with the news media. Not surprisingly, as they tightly controlled it, they were generally happy with the news coverage.

The Frank Aukofer-William P. Lawrence study, *America's Team, The Odd Couple*, Nashville: The Freedom Forum First Amendment Center, 1995, is a major analysis of press coverage of the Gulf War. It includes new polling on military and media attitudes toward each other and extensive interviews with more than eighty high ranking military and government officials and numerous top journalists who examine coverage of the war in great detail.

John Fialka's *Hotel Warriors, Covering the Gulf War*, Washington D.C.: Woodrow Wilson Center Press, 1991, is an excellent account of the tribulations and frustrations of most of the journalists who tried to cover that war. As one of them, I can vouch for its verisimilitude.

In a letter to then Defense Secretary Richard Cheney, the 15 bureau chiefs wrote,

Our sense is that virtually all major news organizations agree that the flow of information to the public was blocked, impeded or diminished by the policies and practices of the Department of Defense. Pools did not work. Stories and pictures were late or lost. Access to the men and women in the field was interfered with by a needless system of military escorts and copy review. These conditions meant we could not tell the public the full story of those who fought the nation's battle.<sup>10</sup>

There was not a lot of sympathy in the Pentagon for these complaints. As Secretary Cheney said later in an interview,

It upsets my friends in the press corps when I say it was the best-covered war in history. They don't like this at all. They fundamentally disagree because they felt managed and controlled.<sup>11</sup>

Adding to the news media's frustration was an American public which did not at all feel cheated; quite the contrary. According to a poll taken by the Times Mirror Center for the People and the Press published just after the war,<sup>12</sup> eight out of ten Americans described the news coverage of the war as excellent or good, with 45% rating it excellent.

Nevertheless, news organizations were determined that having been frozen out of Grenada, patronized in Panama and now burned in the Gulf, there must be a new statement of principles to govern future arrangements for news coverage of the United States military in combat. A proposed set of ten guidelines was sent to Cheney in June 1991. (See Appendix B)

There was nothing very radical in what was proposed. The thrust of it was that independent

reporting should be the "principal means of coverage" and that pools should be limited to "the very first stages of deployment — the initial 24-36 hours — and should then be rapidly disbanded." It was the pools that infuriated most news organizations, as they saw them as the military's insidious instruments of control.<sup>E</sup>

There was, however, one point in the proposed principles which, not surprisingly, became a major stumbling block. It read, "News material—words and pictures—will not be subject to prior military security review." This was an issue on which the military was absolutely unwilling to yield.

And so, on March 11, 1992 a nine point "Statement of Principles for News Coverage of Combat" was jointly adopted by the news media and the Pentagon. Most of the points were essentially what the news media had suggested. On that tenth point however, prior security review, the two sides could only agree to disagree. (See Appendix C)

Although live TV coverage is not mentioned explicitly in the Statement of Principles, the military's refusal to bend on the question of prior security review suggests it wants to maintain this instrument to control such coverage. On the face of it, prior security review would appear to preclude live coverage. How do you censor a live report when the action is on-going, the correspondent is ad-libbing and no one knows the outcome of the event? (Reporters who become adept at live reporting admit that one of the reasons they enjoy doing it is that it is the television news equivalent of a high wire act.)

There is one final point before proceeding to a look at the potential consequences of telecasting live from the battlefield and the prospects for sensible guidelines.

Live TV coverage of war is, of course, not the exclusive purview of the American television networks. In fact, nowadays a major interna-

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<sup>E</sup> Any time journalists submit to a pool, they are surrendering a degree of independence and accepting some level of exclusion. There was a time when the networks fought furiously against any pool, any time. However it is clear that there are many occasions when pool arrangements become necessary. For instance, you can't fit 25 television crews into the Oval Office to watch the President sign something. Nowadays, White House pools are routine and the networks actually encourage them in some cases because it helps keep costs down.

The Department of Defense National Media Pool System was created as a kind of journalistic "quick reaction force" to be put into place at the outset of any war or conflict involving American Military Forces. The DoD Pool includes representatives of major media organizations although its size can vary depending on the available transport, logistical requirements and the size and location of the battlefield. In theory, this pool is only to function at the beginning of a conflict or operation after which open coverage is to be established.

Smaller news organizations inevitably get squeezed out when such pools are invoked, but large organizations too are often unhappy when there is space for only one of their people when many of their stars may be on the scene.

One of the biggest media complaints in the Gulf War was that pool coverage became the norm instead of the exception, as the military used pools routinely as a way of dealing with the large number of reporters covering the war. Under the new principles agreed by the media and the Pentagon in March 1992, that is not supposed to happen in the future.

tional event draws camera crews from the networks of dozens of countries, some friends of the US, some not. The internationalization of the news media is certain to increase. And if someone such as Rupert Murdoch does open his own cable news network, who knows what alliances he might form and what allegiances he will feel?

For the American military, this seriously complicates the issue of press access. It is a complex issue and would certainly be a worthy subject for another study. But for purposes of this paper, I am focusing only on the US networks, ABC, CBS, CNN and NBC.

My rationale is that, at least for the next decade, in time of war they would be the sources of any live coverage for the vast majority of Americans. And any guidelines or accommodations to which the American networks might agree, would certainly be imposed on foreigners by the US military to the extent that it was in a position to impose conditions.

### III. POSSIBLE CONSEQUENCES— THE MILITARY VIEW

The Gulf War of 1991 was the first war in history in which live television cameras were able to capture some scenes or elements of the actual battle. As noted earlier, the technology was cumbersome and relatively primitive compared to what will be possible in the next few years.

Still, people all over the world were able to sit at home and watch bombs landing in Baghdad, Scud missiles hitting in Israel and Saudi Arabia, Egyptian troops crossing into Kuwait on the first day of the ground war, the liberation of Kuwait City, as these events were actually happening.

This introduced a new element to warfare in which the impact of television coverage was exponentially enhanced. As one who has spent his entire adult life as a television news correspondent, during which I have covered a few wars, I was struck by the power of the live picture from the battlefield. Twenty-four years earlier, I had been present at an historic moment on a battlefield, but then the presence of the television camera was barely noticed.

I was with the first group of Israeli soldiers to reach the Suez Canal during the June '67 Mideast War. This was early on a Friday. The film had to be driven back through a tank-and-body-littered Sinai up to Tel Aviv. There was no satellite ground station in Israel at that time, so it next had to be put on a plane to Rome, where it would then be processed and edited. After all

that, it finally got on the air—Sunday night!

By that time, there was a cease-fire, people had read all about the capture of the Suez in the Saturday and Sunday papers, and my big scoop was, at best, a little footnote to history.

I am willing to admit to a trace of envy watching my ABC News colleague Forrest Sawyer telecasting live from Kuwait City as US troops arrived. But I was also genuinely concerned about the potential consequences of this technological breakthrough. Among the questions that came to mind was “what would have happened had there been live television coverage of D-Day?” My own sense then was that it would have been a disaster.

The US Commander for Operation Desert Storm, General Norman Schwarzkopf, was also thinking about such consequences, and neither was he happy about such prospects. To the extent that he could control access, Schwarzkopf tried to make sure that his mission was not threatened by such coverage.

Later I was interested to see Schwarzkopf being quoted as saying that had there been live television coverage of D-Day, “there would have been no D-Day plus two.” In other words, in his view, the Normandy landings would have failed. That conformed to my own analysis and in our interview for this paper that was the first thing I asked him about.

Frankly, [Schwarzkopf replied] the early hours of D-Day were a debacle. But more importantly, the German reaction was that the invasion was still coming at the Pas de Calais. As a result they never committed their reserves into the D-Day area until it was too late. I think most military historians agree that had the Germans committed all their reserves immediately into the D-Day area, that we would never have gained a foothold at Normandy.

*Question: So you anticipate that live TV cameras would have told the Germans that without any question Normandy was the spot?*

Absolutely. The record is replete with indications that some of the commanders were calling back trying to describe what was happening and general headquarters just disregarded it all as—these guys are over-reacting and this is a feint. But I think the magnitude of the effort there, had it been seen by the German general staff, it would have been very obvious to them that this was the main invasion.<sup>13</sup>

General Colin Powell, former Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, was equally adamant



that live television would have turned D-Day into an allied defeat. It is his position that live television simply cannot be allowed during operations such as D-Day.

The thing speaks for itself. If there was live coverage of D-Day and Hitler could sit in Germany in Berlin and listen to the network anchors describing the confusion on the beach ... there would have been no D-Day plus one. Anything that gives away an advantage, an operational advantage to the enemy, has to be looked at most carefully, and I am sure that D-Day would have been a censored operation. It would have to be a censored operation. You could take all the pictures you want, but they wouldn't have been released in real time.<sup>14</sup>

On its face, that would appear to be a pretty compelling argument against live coverage. No television journalist or executive would like to be held responsible for an American military defeat of those proportions.

But not all military historians agree. Retired Marine General Bernard Trainor, who is director of the National Security program of Harvard's Kennedy School of Government and a former *New York Times* military correspondent, says that a TV camera would only have been able to show a small segment of the battlefield and that anyway the German High Command knew full well that this was the real landing. The problem, says Trainor, was Hitler.

What deluded Hitler was his conviction that it was a feint, and his lack of understanding of naval and amphibious matters. [He believed] you could have a feint like that and very quickly shift your forces, which you can't.<sup>15</sup>

Several people, including ABC News Anchor Peter Jennings, took exception to the D-Day analogy on the grounds that you can't just insert one element of 1990's technology (live TV) into a 1940's situation and draw conclusions with any validity. That's a little like asking what would have happened at Gettysburg if the Confederacy had air power. The question has to be: what would the Normandy landings be like with 1990's technology across the board and on both sides?

White House Press Secretary Michael McCurry made a similar point.

D-Day would not have been D-Day [as we know it] had CNN been reporting live, because factoring in

CNN reporting into the mission is now a given part of military planning. They do planning exercises in which Christiane Amanpour showing up for CNN is part of the exercise.<sup>16</sup>

But even conceding those arguments, there is another problem that live television might have created on D-Day, a problem that seems certain to arise with live cameras covering future major American military offensives.

Schwarzkopf says that if people back at headquarters in Washington had been watching the action in Normandy, the arm-chair quarterbacks would have had a field day, which could have caused Eisenhower to consider pulling back.

Even Eisenhower in the very early hours was troubled by what went on. I think it [live coverage] could very easily have caused people to start second guessing very early in the game as to whether or not we should continue with the invasion of the beaches we had selected. And if we had been kicked off the beaches it probably would have been a minimum of a year and by most estimates two years before we could have launched another invasion.<sup>17</sup>

NBC's Tom Brokaw expanded on that, predicting that the problem of the second guessers would have gone far beyond the staff officer-critics in the Pentagon.

Not just the folks in Washington. All the talk shows. There would be armchair strategists on all our programs. Nightline would have devoted a special to it. We would all be on the air [saying], "The price has been very high, we've only gotten halfway up the beach, we're stuck there for two days now."

I think there are consequences to that.<sup>18</sup>

According to General Colin Powell, one of the consequences is that television, particularly when it involves the anchors, has a way of setting the agenda which can have a negative impact on the operation.

In today's environment, the television anchors essentially are almost keeping a death watch on an operation and I think it would have been very difficult to have that hour by hour coverage of something like D-Day.<sup>19</sup>

I spoke to Powell a few weeks into the NATO operation in Bosnia. He was scornful of the

television coverage there, particularly the attention given to the building of the pontoon bridge across the Sava River which apparently took longer to construct than the military originally said it would.

It's been sort of fun to sit here and watch Bosnia. That Goddamn bridge. This was not news but it was made news because all those anchors were over there waiting and since we didn't accommodate them by having a casualty early on, they watched the bridge. And so it was, "Well, it's snowing here, boy it's cold, it's going to be hard, and this bridge just isn't going in."

And here's a picture of a humvee [the jeep's successor] spinning its wheels in the mud, which I saw every hour on the hour for almost a day. What's that got to do with anything? Humvees have been spinning their wheels forever. But now it's an international event because Rather, Jennings and all the rest of them are there and they are going to get on the evening news, not because there's news, but because they're anchors ... the fact that bridges have trouble with high water would have meant nothing to anybody if it hadn't been covered by television.<sup>20</sup>

General Powell is also concerned that when television makes a huge issue over something like that pontoon bridge, everyone from the president on down gets caught up in it. And so, instead of planning grand strategy, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs becomes swamped with a daily barrage of questions from the White House, the Congress and the press about when that bridge will be ready.

I spoke to the current Joint Chief's Chairman, General John Shalikashvili, before US troops went to Bosnia but when contingency plans were being made for the Bosnia operation. He anticipated there would be some live coverage and he too was concerned about the impact of Washington "second guessers" on his commanders.

Maybe there's some good in the fact that commanders know there is going to be live coverage, and they will work their tails off to ensure there isn't a debacle. The bad aspect is...they're going to become timid because they know mistakes happen. They know the more active you are, proactive you are, the more mistakes are probably going to happen. And because none of us wants to become the subject of ridicule, we will grow up a group of leaders who will prefer to be timid, because they

don't want to be second guessed back here.<sup>21</sup>

And that is really just the beginning of what military commanders worry about, when they contemplate live coverage from the battlefield.

Schwarzkopf recounts an incident reported live on one of the networks, which could have cost him the strategic surprise of the Gulf War. That surprise was the "left hook" maneuver, according to which the US Seventh Army Corps, started west of Kuwait, went north into Iraq, curved around to the east and then came in behind the Iraqi forces who were dug in to repel a direct frontal assault on their positions in Kuwait.

According to Schwarzkopf, if the Iraqis had been carefully watching American television, they would have picked up a vital clue as to his strategy for the ground war.

It was reported that at this time, right now, we are witnessing an artillery duel between the 82nd Airborne Division and the Iraqis. If they [the Iraqis] had any kind of halfway decent intelligence, they would have made note of the time...and through their intelligence network they would have pinpointed the location of the 82nd Airborne. Until that time everything they ever saw of the 82nd was on the east coast. All of a sudden they would have found the 82nd way to the west and it would certainly have telegraphed something to them.<sup>22</sup>

Fortunately for the US, the Iraqis did not have "halfway decent intelligence" and they did not pick up this information that should have told them that US troops were massing 200 miles west of Kuwait City. They therefore took no steps to prepare for that major flanking maneuver.

Schwarzkopf went on to explain why knowledge about the "Order of Battle" is so important. It is the job of military intelligence to collect information about all of the various enemy units on the battlefield, and to determine the type, size, equipment and capabilities of each unit. Then, if you can establish the location of these units on the battlefield, you can calculate the other side's probable plan of action.

His concern was that those little details which are crucial to military intelligence are precisely the kinds of things which a reporter might inadvertently disclose, especially if that reporter had limited military experience.

And the information would be even more valuable if it were broadcast live, because then it would be information, fixed to a specific time. That would make it much more useful for

intelligence analysts in determining what the opponent was planning to do next.<sup>F</sup>

There are other inadvertent errors that when made on live television cannot be edited or taken back, and so pose a potential threat to operational security.

At least twice during the Gulf War, once in Israel and once in Saudi Arabia, television correspondents reported live, precisely where a Scud missile had landed. I was more than a little vexed when one of my colleagues went on the air and, in effect, told the Iraqis that a Scud had just missed our hotel in downtown Riyadh by about a block. We journalists were not the target, of course, but we were directly across the street from General Schwarzkopf's command post, which presumably the Iraqis would have been delighted to hit.

As it happens, the Iraqi Scud was notoriously inaccurate. But Scud missiles aside, even in a simple artillery exchange, any artillery officer will tell you that it would be extremely helpful to know where his shells are landing. Artillery men want to know if they have done any damage and if they have inflicted any casualties. That's why they send out forward artillery observers. Live TV might do that job for them.

Likewise, if the camera were to be showing a bombing raid, bomb damage assessment is an extremely useful tool in determining the effectiveness of a given raid. If the opponents can see on television what damage has been done, they can decide whether or not to revisit the target.

Those things may appear to be obvious. But there are even seemingly harmless scenes a live camera might show, which would be helpful to an enemy.

I remember having a run-in with the Israeli censor during the 1973 Middle East War. I had just returned from the Sinai Desert and was preparing my report for that evening's news. Among the pictures we had taken that day were a few shots of an Israeli convoy, just sitting on

the road in Sinai, waiting to move closer toward the Egyptian front.

The censor said, "You can't show that." I asked, "Why not?" He replied, "That convoy includes trucks carrying bridging equipment." I knew that, but I didn't consider it a huge military secret that the Israelis might be planning to cross the Suez canal (which they did, a few days later). Whether or not the Israelis considered it a big secret, they censored it out of my report that night.

In retrospect, I can certainly see that if this had been an uncensored live report, I would have inadvertently told the Egyptians that Israel was planning to cross the canal. They probably would be assuming the same thing but I would have also revealed that at a specific time that day, Israel had that capability, already on trucks, somewhere deep in the Sinai Desert. I'm not suggesting this would have changed the course of the war, but I use the example to illustrate that even something as apparently benign as a camera pan of a convoy just sitting on the road might show the other side a few helpful things. These are some of the pitfalls of live coverage.

But whatever potential problems Schwarzkopf may have had with such coverage, he minimized them by setting up military road blocks and closing off access to the battlefield. He was able to do that because the Gulf War was fought in a Middle Eastern desert in which the US military could exercise almost complete control. It could keep journalists out of the country and, for the most part, away from the front lines.

ABC's Peter Jennings does not find this surprising.

I'm sure military men will tell you the contrary, but I don't believe them. The military would prefer to fight a war in secret. They would prefer that we were not there, except utterly and totally under their control, because it is the nature of military campaigns to have as much under control as you

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<sup>F</sup> This would also seem to be the perfect situation for the military to use live television to put out false information to confuse the enemy. I do not believe the networks would be willing parties to such a deception campaign because it would destroy their credibility. But inexperienced reporters would be likely candidates to be fed disinformation and frankly, even experienced reporters can sometimes be taken in.

While the military denies it would do such a thing such denials can be taken with more than a grain of salt. During the Gulf War, the presence of US Marines off-shore prompted a number of stories that there would be an amphibious assault on Kuwait once the ground war began. Schwarzkopf told me he was delighted with these reports but he denies he ever told reporters that such a landing was planned. Powell later said that there was contingency planning for such a landing but it was never implemented. Powell added that as the Iraqis themselves could see the Marine buildup, the press was not needed to bolster the story. Nevertheless, both Generals admitted that in raising the prospect of a Marine assault, the press had done the military a favor.

can.... If I were a military commander, the last thing I would ever want is the risk that one body ... should be allowed to be exploited by people who are opposed to either the administration or the particular engagement.<sup>23</sup>

But the Gulf War may have been an exception, in terms of the military's ability to impose strict control over a journalist's access to the front. Today's military leadership expects that future involvements of US forces are much more likely to occur in places such as Haiti, Somalia or Bosnia. And such actions are also more apt to be so-called "military contingencies" as opposed to all-out wars.

Common to all these places is the fact that they are accessible to the international news media, and the US military will be in no position to tightly control access to the battlefield, a battlefield which could be any street in Port Au Prince or Sarajevo. For the military, that creates a whole new set of problems.

Admiral Paul David Miller, the former Commander-In-Chief of US Atlantic Forces and the Commander of the Haiti "contingency", made dealing with the issue of live coverage one of his top priorities.

[The Haiti] contingency was laced with media coverage from the very beginning all the way through the build-up to the crescendo of it [almost] happening, when we were just hours away from it being displayed on international television — live.... I put the media coverage right at the top block of my operational planning. And it was factored into everything I did, so much so that in my control room I even had a large screen TV, split on the major channels and CNN, to make sure that I was factoring that real time coverage in on what we were thinking about.<sup>24</sup>

One of Admiral Miller's principal problems was that with four hundred reporters and dozens of live cameras spread throughout the country, there was no way the US could sneak into Haiti.

What I needed was tactical surprise.... It's going to become more and more difficult to achieve strategic surprise. And the commanders have to establish a relationship with the media for tactical surprise.... You want to be able to say, "For the first 15 minutes, the first 30 minutes, pick a time, that you don't want this covered [live]."<sup>25</sup>

As the whole world knew the US was about to invade Haiti, the tactical surprise Miller wanted was to be able to invade at a time and places of his choosing, without the Haitian military being able to watch it all happening on CNN.

As things turned out, of course, there was no invasion as such, but if there had been, the American networks appear to have been willing to grant Miller a chance for that tactical surprise. The way in which the military, the government and the television media interacted over Haiti may well be a model for the future, which I will examine in greater detail in the section on guidelines.

While it was never a major military problem, Haiti was a useful learning experience for the military, a lesson not lost on the Joint Chief's Chairman.

General Shalikashvili appears to have concluded that maneuvers such as General Schwarzkopf's strategic surprise in the Gulf War, which require strict secrecy, may not be possible when there are live television cameras on the battlefield.

When he was worrying about how he was going to hide the fact that he was doing a left hook ... if he knew that he could not keep [live cameras out] and in future, I submit you will not be able to, then he would have not been able to do this maneuver. He would have had to develop his plan differently.<sup>26</sup>

Schwarzkopf's reaction puts a heavy burden on live coverage because he says if he lost his element of surprise there would have been higher US casualties.

Certainly, the Gulf War was one where if there had been live television coverage, I think, if we had telegraphed the plan to the Iraqis, I think they would have re-deployed their troops in such a way, that the outcome would have been the same but the casualty figures I think, would have been higher ... we would have paid a much higher price in lives of the troops.<sup>27</sup>

Shalikashvili takes a more philosophical position, suggesting, as did Admiral Miller, that in the future, military planners are simply going to have to be much more conscious of the possibility of live television coverage when they are developing their battle plans.

From a military perspective it's unfortunate, because it's enough that you have to worry about the enemy, you have to worry about the weather, you have to worry about how much support you have, and you have to consider the tides. Now you have the press<sup>G</sup>.... Just as you cannot change the tides, although you wish that you could if you were MacArthur as you went into Inchon, you have to play with whatever you were dealt with. To the extent you've got to say, I've got this open press, so I've got to figure out how I am going to do this and still be successful, so [live TV] becomes somewhat like the tides.<sup>28</sup>

These then are some of the potential military consequences of live television coverage from the battlefield and some thoughts by former and present military leaders about such consequences and how to cope with or alleviate them.

One thing that was notable in the interviews for this paper, notable but not surprising—the military appears to have given a lot more thought to the issue of live coverage from the battlefield than have the people in television news. And this will give the military an advantage when the issue becomes full blown, which some day, in the not too distant future, it inevitably will.

The military people also have some tricks in their bag and options which they don't want to discuss publicly, which we will explore in the following section which looks at potential consequences from the perspective of the television networks.

#### IV. POSSIBLE CONSEQUENCES— THE TELEVISION VIEW

For people who work in the television industry, "live" is fundamentally different from all other forms of broadcasting. Those not accustomed to being on television discover that going "live", rather than being recorded on tape or film, hyperstimulates their "fight or flight" hormones. As the adrenaline level shoots up, the heart begins to race, the mouth goes dry, the muscles become taut and all of the senses are heightened.

For those who appear on television regularly, the symptoms are not so acute but there is still a measurable physical change. Those who are successful on television are able to focus this energy into an enhanced performance. Most people are just plain scared—and it shows.

The viewer senses all of this, admires the

skillful performer, feels sorry for the poor sap who can't cope, and probably without even realizing it, is energized too by the fact that the performance is live.

Walter Porges, the former ABC News Vice President for News Practices (the news division's legal and ethics watch-dog), expressed a widely held view among television people about the world of difference between live and taped reports.

There are two huge differences. One: the impact is much greater when you can say, "This is happening as we speak folks." The other thing is, "We don't know how this will end." We go on the air with the hijacking in the desert for instance. There are these planes. We don't know what's going to happen next. Are they going to blow up the planes? Are they going to kill people?... I think that "live-versus-this happened a few hours ago" makes a tremendous psychological difference.<sup>29</sup>

It is that psychological difference which has made "live from the battlefield" the dream of many people in television news, going back to the early days of the Vietnam War.

The Vietnam War is now remembered as America's first television war. Today's conventional wisdom also has it that by bringing the war into their living rooms, television caused the American people to lose faith in the war effort and to demand that it be brought to an end.

No one would dispute that the infamous television pictures of US soldiers using Zippo lighters to torch a Vietnamese village — "in order to save it" — were lasting images burned into the American psyche. And it seems reasonable to assume that the daily drumbeat of pictures of the horrors of war would weaken the resolve of the American people.

But it is worth noting that there was an active American military presence in Vietnam for some fourteen years—more than three times as long as the US involvement in World War Two. It can also be argued that it was the number of US dead and wounded which finally turned the American people against the war; also there was the feeling that the reasons for fighting the war, and the way in which it was being fought, ultimately did not make any sense.

By this I do not mean to minimize the impact of television. My argument is simply that the impact was less than it would have been had there been live coverage.

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<sup>G</sup> My interview with the Chairman was very specifically to discuss the implications of live television coverage of the battlefield. He understood that and all of my questions were directly related to such coverage. However, from time to time in the interview, he used "live television" and "the press" interchangeably.

Local newscasts throughout the US have been making much of their "live" coverage for a number of years, apparently in the belief that viewers would be attracted and ratings would rise. The networks later got on the bandwagon, "Prime Time-Live" on ABC, being perhaps the most inauspicious example.

But many of these efforts have been minimized by the technological problems involved in such broadcasts. However, as noted earlier in this paper, in three to five years, live coverage will be available almost anywhere on the globe. And this sets up a whole new series of dilemmas for the networks.

Now that they're on the brink of having the technological capability to transmit live from the battlefield, some key people in the networks, such as Ted Koppel, are openly questioning the very idea.

I realize that I'm speaking heresy here as a journalist, but why do we have to have live coverage of a war?

*Question: Because it's there!*

All kinds of things are there. You know, the secret files of the CIA are there. The President going to the bathroom is there. We apply taste and common sense in other areas, why can't we apply it here?<sup>30</sup>

Dan Rather, on the other hand, makes the case that live television is an important new instrument for quickly getting the best available information to the people, which, he says, is an essential element of American democracy.

I will bet every time on giving individual citizens the most, best possible information, believing that in the main and in most circumstances, given that, they will make the right decisions about what the country's policies should be, and that includes the policy about war.... That's why I say that live television is another tool for getting the best available information to individual citizens in a fast manner. It isn't always orderly.<sup>31</sup>

Cheryl Gould, Vice President of NBC News and former senior producer of the Nightly News, says networks go live on some occasions, because not to, would be withholding information from the American people which the networks have no right to do. In this area of the people's right to know, she suggests, live battlefield coverage might be analogous to election night coverage.

When we have the ability to know right after or before the polls are even closed what the outcome is going to be with some precision, because the technology is there, polling technology, not to mention broadcast technology, we as an industry have always claimed it's the public's right to know.<sup>32</sup>

Her argument is that if you have live pictures of a battle coming into your control room, and if things are going badly for the US, you have no right to withhold that information from your viewers any more than you have the right to keep the outcome of the election a secret.

This argument is regularly challenged by network television critics who counter that by broadcasting only a small portion of the information gathered each day, the networks are withholding information from the people all the time.

In this case, Pete Williams, also of NBC News (although clearly reflecting his years at the Pentagon), is unmoved by the arguments in favor of live coverage and tends to agree with network critics who say live coverage is not a public's right to know issue.

I just think it's hard to articulate a sound national reason that will get applause outside the National Press Club for live coverage of the battlefield....It's hard to stake a claim that live coverage has to be there for any reason other than the fact that we can do it and it would sure be neat.<sup>33</sup>

Bernard Shaw, a principal anchor at CNN, is one of the few TV journalists who has ever reported "live" from a battlefield. In his case, the battlefield was downtown Baghdad as American bombs fell on the Iraqi capital in the opening hours of the Gulf War. As an experienced practitioner, Shaw too has serious reservations about live coverage of war.

I would be worried about lack of perspective, because no matter where you were, you would be operating with no overview of what was going on. And by your mere presence and what is happening to your senses, what you're hearing, what you're feeling, indeed what you're smelling, I would be afraid would cloud your judgment. And it might find you exaggerating, however accurately you were reporting, exaggerating what you were seeing.<sup>34</sup>

I suspect what Shaw is getting at is the fear factor. Very few people who have been in combat have not felt this emotion and he is obviously

concerned that, in a live situation, this fear could and probably would color the judgment of even seasoned reporters. It is one thing to be shot at, and write about it, after the fact. It is quite another thing to talk about it, to a million or more viewers, as the shooting or bombing is actually taking place. Some people would do this better than others, but the emotional strain on the reporter is obviously one of the potential weaknesses of live coverage of war.

Another concern among network officials was voiced by Paul Friedman, the Executive Vice President of ABC News. As the man responsible for running ABC News on a day-to-day basis, Friedman worries about what would happen if his news team and their live capability equipment, should fall into the hands of the enemy.

What would I do if some of my people were taken by an enemy group, and they said, "Put us on live on the ABC television network or your people will die. We have not been able to tell the world our story. And we would like to show you pictures of what American forces have done to our country earlier in the conflict. And we want to do that in our own way, in our own time, and you do that or your people will die." That's not a decision I look forward to.<sup>35</sup>

While that is a hypothetical case, Friedman has already made a real life decision along those lines. In June of 1985, a hijacked TWA plane was on the ground in Beirut. At the time, Friedman was the head of ABC News overseas coverage, based in London.

What he calls some "eager beaver" in New York telephoned the technicians in London to find out if it would be possible to get a live picture from Beirut, by bouncing a microwave signal to Cyprus and from there via satellite to New York.

Before hearing the real answer, Friedman decided to say—it could not be done.

They came to me with that question and I said, "I don't want to know what the truth is, but tell those people back in New York that it can't be done." I didn't want to be in a position of having, in that case Charlie Glass, taken and his captors saying to him, "Put us on the air live or you will die." That would have been a piece of cake for them to do. So I ducked it, essentially, by pretending that technologically it could not be done. But in fact, it could have been done.<sup>36</sup>

Friedman was the only TV executive to raise that particular problem, but the television people with whom I spoke seemed generally to see more liabilities in live coverage than benefits. One over-riding concern among all is the possibility of divulging information during a live broadcast which might lead to the deaths of American troops. Tom Johnson, the President of CNN, fully expects that his network will provide live battlefield coverage, but he concedes he's worried about it.

I think it is definitely a danger; there is no doubt it's a danger. Whenever battlefield conditions occur, that is live battlefield conditions, there will be almost of necessity some types of coordination [with the US military] so that in no way would we jeopardize movements of troops, movements of ships, anything that would endanger the lives of troops on any side.... I think you would have in the Congress and God knows where else, you'd have a firestorm if "live" led to loss of lives.<sup>37</sup>

Firestorm was also a word used by Tom Brokaw when he considered the consequences of a network blunder which cost American lives.

I think that the networks are fat, dumb targets and if they do something as venal as giving away secrets, however accidental it may be, then they would have to stand what I think would be a withering firestorm of criticism coming in. And I don't know what the long term consequences for the First Amendment would be.<sup>38</sup>

The question of how a public backlash might threaten the First Amendment was one I posed to everyone. Brokaw's feeling that it would depend on how serious the mistake had been, was typical.

Certainly, there would be a lot of legislation right out of the box, and people would say, "We're going to change this. You're not going to be able to broadcast live when this nation goes to war. As an instrument of national policy the networks will not be able to broadcast." I mean, there will be a bill. You can count on it, just like that. Whether it will be successful or not I can't say. I think it depends on the magnitude of the blunder.<sup>39</sup>

I should say that the issue of a public backlash which could threaten the First Amendment is not something which has been given much thought by people in television news, in government or in the military. When it is raised, most

everyone sees it as a potential problem; but as they say in the military, it is not on anyone's radar at the moment.

One issue which was on the radar screens of people in television had to do with what steps they felt the military might be prepared to take in order to preserve its operational security and all that phrase implies.

Ted Koppel, like most of his television colleagues, is skeptical about the military's willingness to cooperate in live coverage.

If there is a war and if indeed the Pentagon permits live coverage, they will do so only until the first disaster happens and then they're going to cut it off immediately. I think it makes more sense to anticipate that's going to happen, rather than say, "Oh goody, the military is going to let us cover everything live." You know damn well that the first time that the enemy derives intelligence from that live coverage and comes back and kills a number of American service people, that's going to end. And it's inevitable that would happen.<sup>40</sup>

Peter Jennings goes even further, suggesting the military would be quite prepared to take extreme measures if it feels live TV has become a threat.

My sense is that on the battlefield, the military holds all the cards and all the weapons. So it seems to me that in a situation in which the military was utterly determined to dominate, there is no negotiation. If the military is absolutely determined to prevail, it can suggest, stop or shoot.<sup>41</sup>

Hodding Carter, the State Department spokesman during the Carter Administration (and a former Marine), is quite sure the military is capable of coercive or even drastic action.

There has never been any time I can think of, in which the forces in the field actually allowed the press to do something they thought was going to endanger their lives. They will prevent—they will do whatever they have to do to prevent—because they are in a life and death situation as they define it.<sup>42</sup>

For his part, CNN's Shaw, who covered the war in Vietnam, feels any television journalist the military considered a threat could easily become the victim of so-called "friendly fire."

There is no civility on a battlefield. There is no civility in war. So anything is possible. We cer-

tainly know of instances in Vietnam, when American troops fragged [used fragmentation-grenades against] their officers, their senior non-coms and one another. What's to prevent that from happening to journalists? We usually are not perceived as being great supporters.<sup>43</sup>

When I raised the possibility with General Schwarzkopf that he might be willing to take physical action, such as shooting out the tires of a TV vehicle to prevent a security breach, he laughed at the suggestion.

But the military was a lot more frank, when it was briefing television news executives on the Haiti contingency operation.

CNN's top man, Tom Johnson, remembers that the networks were warned, very bluntly, as to what would happen if lights were turned on during the expected US landings.

General Sheehan, Jack Sheehan [Admiral Paul Miller's successor as Commander-in-Chief of US Atlantic Forces] said that if necessary, the choppers could take out the lights if we put lights on troopers coming down the streets. And they told me this, I mean, this is not hear-say, ... that rules of engagement permitted taking out lights. Well I could have gotten a lot of people in the media killed [if CNN had insisted on using lights].<sup>44</sup>

General Powell completely agreed that the military had every right to take such action. He recalled that he had actually "giggled" at the live television coverage of Somalia landings. He thought turning the lights on the Navy "Seals" was silly, but he calculated that the sight of these heavily armed men emerging from the ocean would scare the Somalis. However, he added, if the Seals had been threatened, the situation would have quickly changed.

If those Seals had come under fire, I can assure you they would have shot everyone in sight, including the light holders. Those lights would not have stayed on if those Seals felt they were in danger.... If they had blown the lights away that would just have been one of the costs of being in a conflict area.<sup>45</sup>

Walter Porges remembered an occasion when he had assigned an ABC News crew to get pictures of the Sixth Fleet, which was on maneuvers in the Mediterranean. When the civilian plane carrying the crew neared the fleet, it was told to move immediately or it would be shot down. This would have been legal under provi-



sions of International Law defining military air space. Nevertheless, it is another reminder to the networks that the military can play rough if they think they are being threatened.

General Powell pulled absolutely no punches about what steps he would take to keep live television from jeopardizing any mission he was commanding. He would lock the TV people up.

We never hit a situation like that in Desert Storm because there was never any part of the operation that was in such real time that what you see would have caused us much operational problem. If we had been losing the battle, in Desert Storm let's say, and the matter in which we were losing it was immediately known to the enemy, I'd have locked all of you up and you could have taken me to every court in the land. And guess who would have won that battle? I mean the American people would have stripped your skin off.<sup>46</sup>

Short of such drastic steps, the military has another option which it is generally reluctant to talk about, but which television people just assume could happen to them—namely, electronic jamming of their live television signal.

The top-level military officers I interviewed would concede nothing on this point. But Dennis Boxx, formerly the Pentagon spokesman and now spokesman of the CIA, told me that when the Haiti contingency was being planned, jamming was considered if the networks would not agree to hold off on live coverage for the first few hours after the US landings.

It [jamming] was discussed. You know, if the networks wouldn't agree to the blackout.... I think we had discussed, not with the networks but among ourselves, a four-hour blackout. And if they wouldn't agree to that, which we knew they wouldn't, then perhaps jamming was an option. But that was immediately abandoned as, I guess, a pretty silly idea.

*Question: Why would that not be a serious option?*

I think it would be operationally. Politically, I think it's a non-starter. I don't see many administrations being willing to stand up to the heat that would generate.<sup>47</sup>

But Mr. Boxx may be over-estimating the political costs of deliberately interfering with network transmissions. In poll after poll, the military shows up miles ahead of the networks in terms of public respect and confidence. There

may actually be a political benefit to an administration taking on those powerful networks.

Margaret Tutwiler, the State Department spokesman during the Bush Administration and long-time advisor to former Secretary of State James A. Baker III, feels strongly that the public would support putting limits on network coverage.

I think Joe Six-Pack sitting out in his home in Sioux City—his first reaction is going to be, "Screw the press." If a military general stands up and says, "This [live coverage] is an interference, it's putting young men's lives in harms way," the networks are going to lose that battle.<sup>48</sup>

It is hard to believe that the military itself is unaware of such sentiment, and that it would not be willing to exploit it. Cliff Bernath, who is currently the Senior Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Public Affairs, left no doubt in my mind that electronic jamming of live television transmissions remains a viable military option.

As the media deal with the ethics of live coverage, we have to deal with the ethics of protecting the operation, and how far and what means we have available to do that. One means is jamming. Is it legal? I don't know. I'll probably go to jail for saying it, but it's one of the tools that's available.<sup>49</sup>

It seems unlikely that Mr. Bernath will be sent to jail for stating the obvious. The networks are certainly aware of that option and will not be surprised if it is used.

To sum up, among senior television news people, live coverage from the battlefield carries with it a host of potentially negative consequences. Then why do it?

The answer is quite simple. Competition. In every TV executive suite, there are banks of television screens showing what every major channel is carrying. The sound is always turned down, but the pictures never stop flickering.

If, during the next war, one of those screens lights up with "live-from the battlefield" coverage, the pressure to duplicate it will be virtually irresistible. No matter all the academic and philosophical arguments against doing so, the nature of the business is such that if one goes, they all go, and there is always an enormous temptation to be the one to go first.

There are differing theories as to why this is the case. The most benign, and the one I lean toward, is that this is a very competitive busi-

ness. Every good reporter in any medium longs for the big scoop. It is often how reputations are made and how salaries are calculated.

A less charitable explanation (which doesn't negate the first) is that the networks are in a dog-eat-dog fight for commercial revenue and they will stoop to anything to improve their ratings. Colin Powell is one who takes this view and he says the situation will get worse if, as now seems likely, there are several all-news channels.

I believe that commercial competitive pressures of an increasing number of all-day-long news programs that require advertising to remain on the air, will make it much more difficult to display the kind of seasoned news judgement that might be appropriate.... We [the military] should always be suspicious that the media will break a secret just for the purpose of getting a commercial advantage.<sup>50</sup>

Television news executives will bridle at such a charge. At the same time, the potential consequences of live coverage of war is not a subject of enormous contemplation among them at this point. I suspect they might very well welcome some limits on live coverage. Among other things, it would relieve them of some of the burden of having to decide when to go live. I shall explore some of these possibilities in the section of this paper on "guidelines," the Haitian model, and other approaches.

## V. POSSIBLE CONSEQUENCES— THE POLITICAL VIEW

The impact of television pictures on diplomacy and policy is a subject of great interest to diplomats, journalists and scholars and thus has been the subject of many books and studies. It is not my intention to re-plow that ground. However, any analysis of the consequences of live television coverage from the battlefield cannot ignore the political implications of such coverage.

Senator John McCain (R-AZ) knows more than a little bit about war, having been decorated in Vietnam and having spent many years as a prisoner of war there. In a CNN interview on the subject of how television pictures from various trouble spots can drive diplomacy and shape policy, McCain readily agreed that television was, if somewhat erratically, setting the foreign policy agenda. And what's more, he seemed to think that was just fine.

We are very selective in our morality because it is driven by the television cameras, and it's not all

bad by the way. I still believe that World War I wouldn't have lasted three months if people had known what was going on in that conflict.<sup>51</sup>

What the Senator is saying is that if television had been able to show people the futility of trench warfare, public support for the war would have been quickly withdrawn.

But as Ted Koppel countered, there is a danger in that situation because democracies are rarely, if ever, in wars with other democracies. They have wars with dictatorships where the same rules do not apply to both sides.

The problem that is implicit in that, is that a democracy will always be at a terrible disadvantage in a war with a totalitarian government, because the totalitarian government will not permit the transmission of live pictures, and might not permit the transmission of any pictures. So what would have happened in the First World War, if indeed live pictures had been shown in the United States, in France, in the United Kingdom—but not in Germany? Guess who would have given up?<sup>52</sup>

Even conceding that Kaiser Wilhelm may not have been as bad a fellow as Adolf Hitler, I doubt that, in retrospect, most Europeans or Americans would chose a German victory as their preferred option for the outcome of World War I.

Like the argument over how live television would have changed the nature of D-Day, what its impact would have been on the First World War depends on many assumptions.

But Senator McCain's assertion does raise a fundamental question. Do we really want our policies shaped by the heated emotions which can be created by lurid television pictures? At the beginning of this paper I raised a more neutral question. What would be the impact of scenes of carnage on the American people in terms of their support for a given foreign policy or war?

Mogadishu, Somalia is a good answer to that question. The pictures of a dead US Ranger being dragged through the streets of the Somalian capital created such a political furor in this country that President Clinton was compelled to withdraw US troops much sooner than had been planned. It was an embarrassing retreat which inevitably caused friend and foe alike to question American reliability and resolve.

General Shalikashvili, who had just been designated Joint Chiefs Chairman at the time of that incident, is troubled by it. He is also worried about its broader implications, namely that

Americans often seem unable or unwilling to accept the reality of casualties during military operations.

If I look at how many casualties the French have had in Bosnia, it hasn't affected their operation one bit. Great Britain, every country that has sent people to Bosnia for a total of over 200 now killed—they haven't had debates like we've had over Mogadishu.... We [the military] would not have left Mogadishu if we [the US] had reacted differently to the killing of those American Rangers. We would not have. Things would have run totally different. So this is a real issue. This isn't some imaginary issue.<sup>53</sup>

Shalikashvili went on to suggest that the problem of casualties was not so much with the American people as it was with the Congress, which he implied was motivated by partisan politics.

I submit to you that it is not necessarily a national debate that we're having on this issue [of casualties]. It is a congressional issue. To what degree it is a politically motivated debate, I won't comment. But it is more a congressional issue than something that is being debated in the press. And it has a most significant impact on what we do or don't do.<sup>54</sup>

The Chairman is obviously concerned that there are some members of Congress who are playing politics with the casualty issue by exploiting public outrage after something like the Mogadishu incident, as a way of promoting their own agendas.

As a general proposition, graphic television pictures involving American casualties are bad for policy makers. Live graphic pictures will be even worse and will inevitably add fuel to the emotional issue of casualties. It should come as no surprise that some politicians will play on these emotions for their own ends.

I found it very interesting therefore, to get a very different interpretation of what Mogadishu meant, from none other than President Clinton's spokesman, Michael McCurry.

That did in fact lead to a collapse of support for the mission. But that's because the mission was very hard to explain and justify to begin with. So in a sense, the reporting serves as a good lever against those missions that are not very well defined or don't have the support of the American people.<sup>55</sup>

In words which could easily come back to

haunt the White House if things were to turn nasty for the Americans in Bosnia, McCurry went on to make a case that live coverage could play a positive role in shaping policy.

I think the capacity for the American people to endure the pain of casualties is directly related to the popular support for the mission that's underway. I think the American people will have the stomach if they think that the cause is just, the mission is right and it's being effectively commanded by the President. If they don't believe those things then those pictures will be horrible for the Pentagon, horrible for the President. But they will ultimately force a reckoning with the policy. And I think in a democracy that's not a bad thing.<sup>56</sup>

But to reiterate Ted Koppel's last point, this puts democracies at a disadvantage when they are at war with a dictator who can totally control what pictures his people can see. Our future political leaders are going to have to take this into account when they consider the use of US military forces.

The one man among the interviewees who may be a future political leader, actually takes an optimistic view about what the American people will tolerate in terms of carnage and casualties. While General Powell is quite prepared to censor live pictures to preserve operational security, he seems to be less concerned about the political impact of such pictures.

Powell said that the burden on policy makers was to have a policy which was understandable and justifiable enough to "sustain carnage."

They're [the American people] prepared to take casualties. And even if they see them on live television it will make them madder. Even if they see them on live television, as long as they believe it's for a solid purpose and for a cause that's understandable and for a cause that has something to do with an interest of ours. They will not understand it, if it can't be explained, which is the point I have made consistently over the years. If you can't explain it to the parents who are sending their kids, you'd better think twice about it.<sup>57</sup>

At several points in our interview Powell talked about the American people being "very smart", "very sophisticated," when it came to dealing with wartime casualties. "They've handled it throughout our history" he said. "We went south in Vietnam because you couldn't explain it anymore."

General Powell's belief that a sound, explain-

able policy can survive gory television pictures is not widely shared. The far more common view among those interviewed for this paper, is that such pictures do have political consequences in that they make it much more difficult to conduct and defend a policy, even when that policy may indeed be in the country's best interests.

## VI. GUIDELINES

The original title of this paper was "Live from the Battlefield: The Urgent Need For Guidelines." But the current title page has dropped the reference to guidelines, because during the course of the research for this paper, it became clear to me that the very word "guidelines" tended to cloud the picture.

There were those who thought guidelines were a great idea. Others thought they were not. It soon became evident that the problem with guidelines was that most people had very different notions as to what guidelines actually were. Here are two examples. Michael McCurry said he didn't approve of guidelines, because he thinks they're a waste of time.

We've seen this happen where that leads to endless, tedious, hypothetical negotiations between journalists and government and no situation will ever fit in with the guidelines because each situation has its own contours.... I would prefer to start with a general rule and tailor it only as necessary to protect lives. The United States Government has a responsibility to report in a timely way to the American people, through news organizations, significant military actions that put US soldiers in harms way. And we have a responsibility to do that immediately.<sup>59</sup>

Ed Fouhy, Director of the Pew Center for Civic Journalism, has held senior management positions with all three networks, and he is an ex-Marine. He is leery of guidelines, because he thinks they would limit the networks' reasonable options.

The thing that concerns me about guidelines is that the media give away their freedoms too quickly in return for logistical support. There's no question there's going to have to be some kind of accommodation ... but I hope we don't start with guidelines.<sup>60</sup>

I infer that McCurry and Fouhy have very different perceptions of what guidelines would

be in this case. And I found that to be generally true among most of the interviewees. Some saw guidelines as a set of rules that would have to be hammered out in negotiations and then would have to be "enforced". The military tended to take that view. Others saw them as a set of general principles that might be nice to follow but probably would carry no real weight. That was more or less the position of people in television.

So, long before there could be any discussions on specific guidelines for live coverage from the battlefield, there was a fundamental split over the very definition of guidelines. My instincts told me that it might be wise to set aside the question of "guidelines" and try to approach the problem from a different direction.

The role of a mediator is to find the common ground among the parties in a dispute. And while I do not presume to be performing such a role, I certainly found, in the course of the interviews, a good deal of common ground on which to build.

For instance, there is a bedrock position of all the players that no one wants live television coverage from the battlefield to endanger American forces. That being the case, there is a basis for discussions on how the military can fulfill its role and how the networks can do their jobs without risking the lives of US troops.

Here, the Haiti contingency may be a useful model in terms of how the military, the government and the networks tried to achieve an accommodation, by which the security of the operation was protected without damage to the First Amendment.

As noted earlier, Haiti represented a very different set of problems for the military. They could not keep reporters out. There were already hundreds there. Some form of live coverage was very likely as the networks all had such capability in place. And the US government had made a policy decision to tell the Haitian leadership that an invasion was imminent.

Having decided that there was no acceptable way to prevent live coverage of that invasion, the administration moved to try to shape the coverage. David Gergen, then a senior advisor to President Clinton, organized a Pentagon meeting to include the Washington bureau chiefs of the four networks — Robin Sproul of ABC, Barbara Cochran of CBS, Bill Headline of CNN and Tim Russert of NBC — the then director of operations for the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Marine General Jack Sheehan; Dennis Boxx, the Pentagon

spokesman at the time, and Gergen and one or two others from the White House. Senior executives from the network head offices were listening in on speaker phones.

As Gergen explained, the purpose of this meeting was to give the military a chance to lay out its plans and its concerns about the potential impact of live coverage of the event.

The primary issue was whether the troops could go in and maintain an element of surprise, should an order have gone forth, to go in.<sup>61</sup>

In order to achieve that tactical surprise the administration was asking the networks not to go on air live with the departure of American planes from US bases, which would signal the beginning of the invasion. To do so would give the Haitians a three hour warning. The other request was for a television blackout in the initial stages of the troop landings.

Some wildly optimistic civilians in the White House thought this blackout should last for several hours. Gergen says that, realistically, he hoped for about an hour, so that the Haitians would not know precisely when or where the landings were taking place.

Once it hit, it was understood that they [the networks] were going to move to simultaneous reporting pretty fast, because the other side would already know we were there. There was no point in not telling the American people if the other side was already engaged. So really, the essential issue was one of surprise. And I must say that to the credit of those people engaged on the network side, they all agreed with that.<sup>62</sup>

The other request the military made at that meeting had to do with the use of lights on paratroopers and helicopters. As discussed earlier in this paper, there may have been an element of intimidation in that "request" that lights not be used.

But it is also true that those who recalled the infamous Somalia landings, when some of the networks did use lights on the first Americans to come ashore, were determined not to do that again. While General Powell just thought it was silly, there is a broad consensus that the coverage of those landings was an embarrassing fiasco for both the networks and the military.

Gergen feels very pleased with how that Pentagon meeting went, and he believes it might well represent a model for how things might be handled in the future.

I felt very good walking out of the room. I felt we had gone a long way in understanding each other about what the relative needs were, respectful of the needs of the press and respectful of protecting American soldiers.... I found the networks to be extremely reasonable.... What has evolved in this, in my judgment, is that the military has become much, much more reasonable about this issue.<sup>63</sup>

Meantime, there was another track that Gergen and the White House were developing. While it is true that most Americans would be watching the invasion on the three major over-the-air networks, the Cable News Network, CNN, has world-wide distribution and thus deserves special attention, as it will in most cases in the future. Michael McCurry told me the Pentagon's operations chief said at the time, "Cedras (Haiti's then military ruler) is watching CNN. So long as Wolf Blitzer (CNN's White House Correspondent) doesn't have it, we're basically okay."

According to CNN President Tom Johnson, his first discussion with the Clinton administration on Haiti coverage was a conference call with White House officials which he thinks David Gergen initiated. Johnson said that this conversation led to what he described as "frequent discussions with Admiral Miller (the Commander of the Haiti operation) throughout."

It was their view [the White House] that if at my level and at his [Miller's] level, if we could just communicate on it, that probably we could do our jobs responsibly and they could do theirs. He was not going to put in any kind of draconian pool arrangements and we were going to respect their need for operational secrecy.<sup>64</sup>

We have already covered the extent to which Admiral Miller considered the possibility of live coverage in his planning. CNN was a major concern. Miller confirms this and the fact that he worked directly with Johnson.

Tom Johnson might have told you that they were set to cover this one live. I mean, they were clearly set to cover it. And so, knowing that, how does a commander factor that into what he does? I worked with him in factoring that in.<sup>65</sup>

Neither the Admiral nor Johnson went into detail about their contacts, beyond confirming they talked regularly throughout the critical moments of the Haitian contingency. But it is evident that both men believe that dialogue was useful.

Johnson of course is concerned that this kind of collaboration not be misconstrued.

My gut concern on the one side is that we become some arm of the military or arm of the government. We must not. We can not. On the other hand, I don't want to jeopardize lives of people coming ashore by inadvertently turning on live cameras.<sup>66</sup>

But in spite of Johnson's uneasiness that CNN might be perceived as being in the government's pocket, it appears he would do it again.

I think that type of communication can be helpful, and I'll tell you, everywhere along the line, I asked myself, how's this going to look if it's on the front page of tomorrow's *Washington Post*? We're as tough and as competitive here and dedicated to getting the story out as anybody. But I do think that type of communication is helpful.<sup>67</sup>

The Haitian model is essentially built then on high level communications between senior military and senior network officials. Actually, Chairman Shalikashvili feels that in the case of Haiti, the consultations should have started earlier.

I submit to you that had we brought in the very senior leadership of the major networks [earlier], we would have even more support. This is where my fellow uniformed guys will probably turn over in their graves, but as you start planning a military operation, you become aware of factors which shape your plan. One of the factors today is this open, instant reporting, particularly live coverage. So now you need to shape your plan knowing that this exists.<sup>68</sup>

It should be stressed that Tom Johnson of CNN is not the only network executive who does not wish to be seen doing the bidding of any administration or the Pentagon. And that is probably one of the reasons high-level contact takes place only rarely.

Another reason is that television executives live in a 24-hour news cycle, in which news organizations expend enormous energy each day re-inventing themselves and their product.

There are network people responsible for long term planning. But the main decision makers do not spend any appreciable time on strategic and future matters. As it is in the nature of military people to plan ahead, it is in the nature of

television news people to be happy to get through the events of the day.

Therefore it is apparent that senior television executives could derive considerable benefit from periodic discussions with high-level military people, if only so that when the next crisis occurs, they are not making decisions in a vacuum.

But all contacts between military and television people need not necessarily be at the highest level. In fact, General Bernard Trainor of Harvard believes that it is the relationships in the field, which can be the most productive. Trainor says that reporters who expect to be doing live coverage must get to know the local unit commanders and if they do, they are much less likely to make costly mistakes.

With reasonable association with the unit you're with, and with a certain amount of trust and openness and exchange between the television journalist and the military command he's covering, the dangers even of the inadvertent disclosure of something that would violate security are very low. That's because the military guy is going to be able to tell you, "In your reporting—make sure you don't do this or [make sure you] do that."<sup>69</sup>

General Trainor cites the example of General Dwight Eisenhower, on the eve of D-Day, telling reporters he knew and trusted how the operation would be conducted.

The journalists were told, "So you understand what's going on around you, here is what we're going to do." And the journalists armed with that, then covered the thing and were discreet. There's no reason why television journalists can't do the same thing.<sup>70</sup>

Without the World War II censorship system protecting Eisenhower, it is fair to ask how much secret strategy a unit or battle commander might be willing to confide in today's television reporter.

Still, one such reporter, the legendary Peter Arnett, now with CNN, has many times gained the confidence of the military people he has covered, from Vietnam to the Gulf to Bosnia.

Arnett says that the secret of his success and survival is that he always plays by the rules set down by the people he is with.

I've always looked at it this way. That if you're travelling with an organization or institution, if you're the guest of the Serbian Army, the FMLN in

Central America, or HAMAS or the US military, you play by their rules. If you don't, you're going to get your throat cut.<sup>71</sup>

Forrest Sawyer was able to get into Kuwait to cover the liberation "live", not because of any deals cut by the ABC News brass in New York or Washington. He was able to persuade a series of unit commanders, Saudi Arabian, Egyptian and American, that he was serious and could be trusted. And then, he was true to his word.

I found that the closer I got to the front, and the further away I got from the rear echelon guys, the better off I was. I could say, "Here I am, this is what I want to do. You tell me what you need and I'll work with you and I'll make it right." A Special Forces Colonel that I met turned out to be just aces. The same with the Kuwaiti resistance guys. There was no problem whatsoever. The problems all existed back at Dhahran [headquarters].<sup>72</sup>

There is another approach, in lieu of guidelines, worth mentioning. On many occasions, network people will be willing to trade-off live capability in exchange for going in with the troops, some logistical help and the ability to get the story out and on the air in a timely manner. This can almost always be negotiated and might ease some fears about live coverage.

Finally, for all the talk about going live, when they really stop to think about it, television people such as Peter Jennings are very ambivalent about the prospects of live coverage from the battlefield. When they are handling live coverage, Jennings and his fellow anchors are known, and think of themselves, as gatekeepers. They have a major role in deciding who and what gets on the air; so this ambivalence is significant.

I tend to be inclined against live coverage of events like this, basically because I think technology is making it difficult for us to think and contemplate what's going on. [The American people] are not all that well served by the new technology. I think there is a general tendency to slow down, when you have this option for live pictures on the battlefield. I think I will say to myself, Why? Why do they have to be live? Why can't they wait until tomorrow? Why can't we wait until six o'clock?<sup>73</sup>

Jennings does not speak for the entire television industry. The pressure of competition (journalistic or commercial) may force a decision to go live, even when people such as Peter or Ted

and Dan, Tom and Bernard have serious reservations about doing it.

But it could be that this reluctance to go live, and the growing awareness of its potential consequences, may be more effective than any guidelines, in reducing the downside of live coverage.

## VII. CONCLUSION

Drawing conclusions about something which has yet to happen may be a very questionable exercise, but thirty years as a network television news correspondent has left me nothing if not presumptuous. Such conclusions will of course be very subjective in nature, but having wrestled with the issue for a number of years and looked at it very closely this past year, it seems to me there are some answers to the questions posed at the beginning of this paper.

**Question: Just because live television coverage from the battlefield is possible, is it desirable?**

Probably not, but it is going to happen in any case. The phrase "we do things because we can" while used repeatedly by people in television, is hardly unique to that industry. It can more properly be applied to the way in which the human species normally behaves.

Historically, we begin to use those technologies which are at hand, long before we have any understanding of their implications. And so there will likely be some live television coverage of future wars, because it's possible.

**Question: What are its likely consequences in terms of operational security and might it even affect the outcome of a battle or war?**

There is no doubt that it has the potential to threaten operational security. There is always going to be a problem with inadvertent disclosure of information, which will be of use to the other side.

As General Schwarzkopf was able to explain, even a seemingly trivial piece of information regarding the order of battle, identifying the location of a given unit at a precise moment, can be extremely helpful to even modestly competent intelligence analysts.

As fewer and fewer people in television have any military background at all, this adds to the chances that television will inadvertently disclose useful information to the enemy.

Now whether that information is likely to change the outcome of a battle or a war is a much different question. I think that probability is much lower.

General Trainor says one of the most egre-

gious examples of the press breaching security, occurred three days before the first major battle of the Civil War when the *New York Times* published the Order of Battle and the battle plan of the Union Army. That may be a factor in the Army's historical mistrust of the press, but as we know, it did not change the outcome of the Civil War.

At the same time, it does appear that the existence of live television may change the way certain battles will be fought in the future. I was struck by General Shalikashvili's suggestion that live TV might preclude future strategic surprises such as General Schwarzkopf's famous "left hook" maneuver in the Gulf War. I was also impressed by the chairman's analysis that in future wars, live television coverage will have to be factored into the overall planning, just like the tides, the weather and other problems that are not controllable.

However, I fully expect that in the event of a major battle or war in which live coverage is seen as a threat, the US military will, as General Powell suggested, lock up the TV people or close down the live television operations, one way or another. This reality leads me to conclude that a battle or war will not be lost because of live coverage.

**Question: Could a mistake in live broadcast, which led to the loss of American lives, cause such a public backlash that democratic freedoms might be threatened?**

There was nearly unanimous opinion among those interviewed for this paper that such a mistake would cause a public outcry and that there would be some political demagogues who would demand legislation to curb the power of the networks. But most people didn't think this would actually lead to limitations on the First Amendment.

It is worth noting that after the United States went to war in 1917, Congress passed the Espionage and Sedition Acts, designed to suppress obstruction or criticism of the war effort. Dozens of journalists and other citizens were prosecuted and jailed as a result.

But First Amendment scholars, such as Professor Frederick Schauer of the Shorenstein Center of the Kennedy School, point out that until that time, very little attention had been paid to the amendment, and there was no great opposition to the idea of setting limits during wartime.

It would seem that given the body of First Amendment legal precedent set in this century, attempts to place such limits today would quickly be challenged in the courts with the

likelihood that any specific limits to the First Amendment itself would eventually be struck down.

Still, the networks are vulnerable to government pressure. They have little popular support and they have to be concerned that on issues such as broadcast licensing or regulation, they could be directly targeted by a Congress urged on by an angry public.

Which raises another issue. Most of this paper is based on the premise that the American television networks will maintain the integrity of their news departments and within the bounds of genuine national security will want to push the envelope for as much coverage as possible. I hope that premise continues to hold. I think that as long as the present leadership of the network news divisions is in place, it will.

But as each network becomes part of an ever-growing poly-glomerate—huge corporations with no history, experience or commitment to news—one should not assume network news coverage will remain aggressive.

One does not have to be a conspiracy theorist to visualize a situation whereby companies with worldwide holdings and any number of interests subject to government regulation would not want to go out of their way to antagonize a given government or administration. When corporate lawyers have the final decision about news coverage based primarily on the fear of potential law suits, that is a danger signal.

Could there come a time when the networks would be only too willing to bend to the wishes of the government and ban all live battlefield coverage in order to ingratiate themselves for future business benefit?

Frankly, I don't know, but it bears watching.

**Question: What about guidelines?**

I don't see prospects for a formal set of rules for live coverage, negotiated in advance between the government and the networks. There appears to be merit in an ad hoc approach, where, in a specific crisis, very senior military people bring very senior television people into the planning process and work out the ways television can operate so that it will not jeopardize the mission. Having periodic meetings at high levels could also be useful. The military is thinking about this issue. By and large the networks aren't, and occasional high level discussions might help to focus their attention.

I also foresee many occasions when the networks will be willing to forego live coverage in return for good access and a way to transmit uncensored material, some reasonable time after the fact.



Also, as noted, some of the best guidelines can be evolved by the people in the field themselves, journalists and unit commanders, who have developed a degree of mutual trust.

**Question: What about the political consequences of the American people watching coverage of US soldiers being killed—live and in living or dying color?**

There will definitely be consequences. If it were a war of survival, such as World War II, one would imagine that public toleration for such scenes would be greater than if it were some less important police action. But in either case, it will place a heavy burden on the political leadership to keep public support from flagging.

In spite of General Powell's faith in the people, in recent years Americans have been conditioned to believe that it is possible to fight wars and not sustain any casualties. Presidents of both parties, the Pentagon, the Congress and the news media share the blame for this.

While no one wants to see Americans killed or wounded in some meaningless military campaign, US policy makers must not be precluded from choosing the best policy option for the country's interests, just because that option could involve casualties. To the extent that there is live coverage from the battlefield, that issue will be greatly magnified.

This suggests to me that in the case of a future war in which American vital interests were at stake, the government of the day might well have to take steps to severely limit live coverage, or to ban it in some circumstances, as a way of preserving the national will. This is as crucial as protecting operational security.

I do not believe such steps would be appropriate for peace-keeping missions or contingency operations as in Bosnia or Haiti. It would have to be something of the magnitude of a US land war with China or North Korea or perhaps a new Gulf War, which I suppose are the most obvious battlefields one could imagine for the next decade or two.

In that event, I believe there would be strong public support for limitations on live coverage, and I expect there would only be perfunctory protests on the part of the networks.

In the final analysis, live coverage from the battlefield is not protected by the First Amendment. Nor is it synonymous with the public's right to know.

Live television can be, in some circumstances, an interesting tool, but it is not an essential one to the practice of good television journalism. And in my view, it is good journalism which is

the best protection of freedom of the press and the American people's right to know.

## ENDNOTES

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**APPENDIX A**  
INTERVIEWS CONDUCTED BY THE AUTHOR FOR THIS PAPER

**MILITARY**

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JOINT CHIEFS OF STAFF 10/26/95

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FORMER CHAIRMAN, JOINT CHIEFS OF  
STAFF 01/03/96

GENERAL NORMAN SCHWARZKOPF (RET)  
DESERT STORM COMMANDER 10/24/95

ADMIRAL PAUL DAVID MILLER (RET)  
FORMER COMMANDER IN CHIEF  
ATLANTIC FORCES AND COMMANDER OF  
HAITIAN CONTINGENCY OPERATION 11/  
06/95

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ED FOUHY, DIRECTOR, PEW CENTER FOR  
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GRAHAM HADDEN, DIRECTOR OF  
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## APPENDIX B

### STATEMENT OF PRINCIPLES-proposed by news media June 24th, 1991.

We believe these are the principles that should govern future arrangements for news coverage of the US military in combat:

1. Independent reporting will be the principal means of coverage of US military operations.
2. The use of pools should be limited to the kind envisioned by the Sidle Commission. Pools are meant to bring a representative group of journalists along with the first elements of any major US military operation. These pools should last no longer than the first stages of deployment—the initial 24 hours to 36 hours—and should be disbanded rapidly in favor of independent coverage. Pools are not to serve as the standard means of covering US forces.
3. Some pools may be appropriate for events or in places where open coverage is physically impossible. But the existence of such special-purpose pools will not cancel the principle of independent coverage. If news organizations are able to cover pooled events independently, they may do so.
4. Journalists in a combat zone will be credentialed by the US military and will be required to abide by a clear set of military security guidelines that protect US forces and their operations. Violation of the guidelines can result in suspension of credentials or revocation of credentials and expulsion from the combat zone.
5. Journalists will be provided access to all major military units.
6. Military public affairs officers should act as liaisons but should not interfere with the reporting process.
7. News material—news and pictures—will not be subject to prior military security review.
8. The military will be responsible for the transportation of pools. Field commanders should be instructed to permit journalists to ride on military aircraft and aircraft wherever feasible.
9. The military will supply PAOs with timely, secure, compatible transmission facilities for pool material and will make these facilities available whenever possible for filing independent coverage. In cases when government facilities are unavailable, journalists will, as always, file by any other means available and will not be prevented from doing so. The military will not ban communications systems operated by news organizations.
10. These principles will apply as well to the operations of the standing DoD National Media Pool system.

## APPENDIX C

### STATEMENT OF PRINCIPLES: NEWS COVERAGE OF COMBAT

Adopted by representatives of major American news media and the Pentagon, March 11th, 1992.

1. Open and independent reporting will be the principal means of coverage of US military operations.
2. Pools are not to serve as the standard of covering US military operations. But pools may sometimes provide the only feasible means of early access to military operations. Pools should be as large as possible and disbanded at the earliest opportunity—within 24 to 36 hours when possible. The arrival of early-access pools will not cancel the principle of independent coverage for journalists already in the area.
3. Even under conditions of open coverage, pools may be appropriate for specific events, such as those at extremely remote locations or where space is limited.
4. Journalists in a combat zone will be credentialed by the US military and will be required to abide by a clear set of military security ground rules that protect US forces and their operations. Violations of the ground rules can result in suspensions of the credentials and expulsion from the combat zone of the journalist involved. News organizations will make their best efforts to assign experienced journalists to combat operations and to make them familiar with US military operations.
5. Journalists will be provided access to all major military units. Special Operations restrictions may limit access in some cases.
6. Military public affairs officers should act as liaisons but should not interfere with the reporting process.
7. Under conditions of open coverage, field commanders will permit journalists to ride on military vehicles and aircraft whenever feasible. The military will be responsible for the transportation of pools.
8. Consistent with its capabilities, the military will supply PAOs with facilities to enable timely, secure, compatible transmission of pool material and will make these facilities available whenever possible for filing independent coverage. In cases when government facilities are unavailable journalists will, as always, file by any other means available. The military will not

ban communications systems operated by news organizations, but electromagnetic security in battlefield situations may require limited restrictions on the use of such systems.

9. These principles will apply as well to the operations of the standing DoD national Media Pool System.

The major news organizations proposed 10 principles. Point 7. in their proposals read: "News material—words and pictures—will not be subject to prior military security review." In the negotiations on this point the Pentagon proposed instead, the following: "Military operational security may require review of news material for conformance to reporting ground rules." The news media found this to be unacceptable, and so each side issued separate statements on the issue.

#### **News Media Statement**

The news organizations are convinced that journalists covering US forces in combat must be mindful at all times of operational security and the safety of American lives. News organizations strongly believe that journalists will abide by clear operational security ground rules. Prior security review is unwarranted and unnecessary.

We believe that the record in Operation Desert Storm, Vietnam and other wars supports the conclusion that journalists in the battlefield can be trusted to act responsibly.

We will challenge prior security review in the event that the Pentagon attempts to impose it in some future military operation.

#### **Department of Defense Statement**

The military believes that it must retain the option to review news material to avoid the inadvertent inclusion in news reports of information that could endanger troops safety of the success of a mission.

Any review system would be imposed only when operational security is a consideration—for example, the very early stages of a contingency operation or sensitive periods in combat. If security review were imposed, it would be used for one very limited purpose: to prevent disclosure of information which, if published, would jeopardize troops safety or the success of a military operation. Such a review system would not be used to seek alterations in any other aspect of content or to

delay timely transmission of news material.

Security review would be performed by the military in the field, giving the commander's representative the opportunity to address potential ground rule violations. The reporter would either change the story to meet ground rule concerns and file it, or file it and flag it for the editor whatever passages were in dispute. The editor would then call the Pentagon to give the military one last chance to talk about ground rule violations.

The Defense Department believes that the advantage of this system is that the news organizations would retain control of the material throughout the review and filing process. The Pentagon would have two chances to address potential operational security violations, but the news organization would make the final decision about whether to publish the disputed information. Under Principle Four, violations of the ground rules could result in expulsion of the journalist involved from the combat zone.

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