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MEDIA AWARENESS

Staff Sgt. Joshua Horneck
Web Manager, Michigan National Guard



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Task

- Plan for media interaction and interview
- Understand why media awareness is vital to the success of the Army's mission

Condition

In a classroom environment, the instructor provides guidance from the Army Chief of Staff on “Selling the Army Story”, public affairs guidance and information on handling and conducting media interviews.

Standard

Each Soldier will possess a working knowledge of the role of the media in military operations, how to react to and handle the media and how to conduct an interview.



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References

- FM 46-1, Public Affairs Operations, JUL 92
- FM 100-5, Operations, 14 JUN 93
- CALL Newsletter 92-7, Media and the Tactical Commander
- CALL Newsletter, News from the Front, SEP/OCT 95



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Why talk to the media?

We owe it to the American people, our Soldiers and their families to tell their story to the nation. You are part of history and current events.

If we do not speak for the Army, others will...



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Public sentiment is everything.

With public sentiment, nothing can
fail. Without it, nothing can succeed.

- President Abraham Lincoln -



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Preparing for an Interview

- Prepare key points in advance
- Rehearse, rehearse, rehearse
- Check uniform
- Arrive early for pre-arranged interviews



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Things to Remember

- Do not compromise operational security or force protection
- Be prepared to answer questions pertaining your area of responsibility
- Nothing is off the record
- Interviews are voluntary



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What do reporters want?

- Information
- Tell it first, tell it better
- The human side



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What is the purpose of the media?

- To inform
- To entertain
- To educate
- To provide a public forum
- To make money: advertising/circulation



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Understanding the Media

- Fact: Media will be a part of operations.
- Dueling agendas/attitudes
- Spokesperson's rules to live by
 - Know the topic
 - Know if it will be live or taped



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Set the Ground Rules

- Narrow topic of discussion
- No speculation
- No information that will endanger Soldier's lives
- You are not obligated to answer any questions



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Set the Ground Rules

(Continued)

- You may end the interview at any time
- Listen to each question
- Relax and be yourself



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Conduct the Interview

- If you cannot answer a question, explain why
- Avoid answering questions about:
 - Future operations
 - Rules of engagement
 - Specific casualty numbers
 - Troop strengths
 - Equipment
- Assume everything is ‘On The Record’



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Conduct the Interview

(Continued)

- Treat the media with respect
- Understand the impact of your response
- Speak plainly and avoid jargon
- Listen and clarify before you respond
- Keep your answers clear and short



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Blocking and Bridging

- Blocking: politely declining to answer a question
- Bridging: offering an alternative command message
 - Blocking phrases
 - “For security reasons, I cannot discuss...”
 - “I am not the subject matter expert on that, but...”
 - Bridging Phrases
 - “You may be interested to know...”
 - “I can tell you that...”



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Command Message

Statements or information that explain the command's position on a particular issue or event.



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Command Messages

1. People are responsible for our success...
2. We have the best trained people in the world...
3. People are our most important asset...
4. There is no substitute for excellence in caring for people...
5. We are proud to participate in this mission to save lives...
6. We are here because they need our help...
7. This exemplifies our ability to perform any mission.



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Why is media important?

- Public perception hinges on the media
 - A good story encourages support from the nation
 - A bad story embarrasses the nation
- The media will publish their story
 - If you cooperate, it can help your mission
 - If you refuse to cooperate, it will hinder your mission



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What if I blow it?

- Inform your chain of command immediately
- Ask for help if you need it
- Ask the media not to use that answer or tape
- Do not assume nothing will come of the story



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Conclusion

- It's your interview
- You should have a clear agenda beforehand
- You should deliver your message regardless of the questions or type of media
- Think how the media can help your mission



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QUESTIONS?