

Media Skills Training Guide

A MEDIA PRIMER

**Division of Public Affairs
Headquarters, U. S. Marine Corps**

REV: 03-02

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Introduction

More than any other country in the history of the world, the United States is a nation based on the power of ideas. The rights of free people to express themselves and obtain information from their government are guaranteed in the Constitution and in our laws. This is the essence of our freedoms as Americans because, without these rights, democracy cannot exist.

In simple terms, the Marine Corps' very existence as part of our government depends on the "consent of the governed." In the words of Abraham Lincoln, we are a government "*of the people, by the people and for the people.*" We exist today because the public has insisted that we exist. To survive in the future, we must continue to earn the public's trust and support.

As stated in the following pages, "*What the public thinks depends on what the public hears...*" There is no other way to put it. In our society, the public depends on a free press to keep it informed. If we want public support, we must learn to work with the news media.

This booklet is intended to help you do just that. Read it. Study it. And, when the opportunity presents itself, put its principles into action.

Principles of Information

It is the policy of the Department of Defense to make available timely and accurate information so that the public, Congress and the news media may assess and understand the facts about national security and defense strategy.

Requests for information from organizations and private citizens will be answered in a timely manner. In carrying out this policy, the following principles of information will apply:

- Information will be made fully and readily available, consistent with statutory requirements, unless its release is precluded by current and valid security classification. The provisions of the Freedom of Information Act will be supported in both letter and spirit.
- A free flow of general and military information will be made available, without censorship or propaganda, to the men and women of the Armed Forces and their dependents.
- Information will not be classified or otherwise withheld to protect the government from criticism or embarrassment.
- Information will be withheld only when disclosure would adversely affect national security or threaten the safety or privacy of the men and women of the Armed Services.

The Department's obligation to provide the public with information on its major programs may require detailed public affairs planning and coordination within the Department and with other government agencies. The sole purpose of such activity is to expedite the flow of information to the public:

Propaganda has no place in Department of Defense public affairs programs.

Why Military-Media Relations are Important

As an institution of the United States Government, the Marine Corps, like the other Armed Services, must have the public's support in order to survive.

We are now in the post-Cold War period. The collapse of the Soviet Union has led to a major transition in American defense and foreign policy. As different views of our military priorities are debated, we must learn to explain, possibly even defend, our new and emerging roles to our fellow Americans. Maintaining an adequate national security posture and a combat-ready Marine Corps will require public support and an understanding of our military mission and people. Ultimately, the American public, through its elected representatives, will make the final decisions on any new policies.

National security and public accountability are not incompatible. As a public institution, we have an obligation to provide timely and accurate information to American taxpayers. The Department of Defense policy in this area is very explicit: "MAXIMUM DISCLOSURE WITH MINIMUM DELAY. Information will be withheld only when disclosure would adversely affect national security or threaten the safety or privacy of the men and women of the Armed Forces."

What the public thinks depends on what the public hears. The public depends on the American news media to keep it informed. Wire services, newspapers and radio and television stations are the "intelligence network" for an informed American citizenry. They provide a daily record of public events and are relied upon by the public to evaluate important issues and events, including the activities of the Marine Corps!

Perception

In this technologically advanced era the familiar adage, “Reality is not what is, but what it is perceived to be, “ rings louder than ever before. Most people are aware of, or are concerned about, the Marine Corps. They gain whatever knowledge and appreciation they have, not from direct contact or experience, but from remote observation. Usually, this information is derived through the media.

In fact, much of the public’s high opinion of the Marine Corps’ effectiveness derives from press accounts. News media have accompanied Marines and reported our accomplishments in nearly every major engagement in which we have participated. From the first recruits at Tun Tavern, through the Spanish-American War, World Wars I and II and including Desert Storm, the public has depended on a free and independent press to keep it informed.

The media collects and publicizes the Marine Corps story. Consider the legendary AP photographer, Joe Rosenthal, who accompanied Marines during the landings on Iwo Jima in 1945. His photo of the heroic flag raising on Mt. Suribachi was distributed throughout the world and remains not only one of the most famous combat photos ever taken, but also an enduring symbol of Marine Corps courage and commitment to duty.

We must actively seek to keep the media informed of whom we are so that our story will be told. At the same time, we also need to respond to legitimate news media requests for information and be prepared to understand that the resulting story may not always be to our liking.

Whether the coverage is good or bad, if we are going to effectively represent the Marine Corps position on an issue, we must understand the communications process. Our positive image represents the result of years of dedication to duty and the personal sacrifice of thousands, many of who gave their lives. We have a duty to tell their story and the story of our Corps. For, if we don’t, who will?

Understanding the Media

Cooperation with the press is essential to projecting a strong, positive image. In general, the majority of news reporters are not hostile toward the military.

Do not fall prey to the skepticism or cynicism of some reporters. Always keep control of your message. Remember, no matter how familiar the media may be with a particular topic or event they are covering, YOU are the “expert” for the Marine Corps. Sometimes, we must react to unanticipated events, such as accidents. **Usually, the best approach is always to be PROACTIVE and plan your approach to public communications actions as carefully as you would plan any military operation.**

In order to do this, we need to understand certain features of media coverage which may lead to distortion of our messages:

- **Short Deadlines:** Reporters operate under tight deadlines, which can vary, depending on the outlet.
- **Time/Space Limitations:** Print, radio and television have small spaces (such as a sentence or paragraph) or short time periods (such as 10-30 seconds). You must organize your thoughts and be prepared to condense them into a few sentences or thoughts. Be brief and to the point.
- **“Prize” Journalism:** Some reporters may be looking for the big story of waste, fraud or abuse to win professional acclaim and praise. Be careful.
- **“Pack” or “Trend” Journalism:** Important or breaking stories are usually followed by a spate of follow-on stories on the same or similar subjects. For example, if a series of aircraft accidents occurs over a short period, the collective media pack may start to generate stories focusing on aviation issues related to the aircraft or the type of incidents involved.
- **Inexperienced Reporters:** Some reporters without first-hand experience will not know the difference between a colonel and a

corporal. At the same time, many military nicknames and acronyms can be indecipherable, even to an experienced reporter. Don't insult your guest. Try to translate military terminology into civilian terms. Simple, "plain English" descriptions and a positive attitude will score points and most reporters will appreciate the assistance. More importantly, a helpful attitude will usually generate credibility and help you get your point of view across. Make every possible effort to educate the reporter to your terminology before the interview.

Proactive communications with the media neutralizes critics and eliminates embarrassing distortions. Prior planning is critical; don't "wing it." Before granting any interview contact your local public affairs officer. Remember, the media will not hesitate to remind you of your oath to the U. S. Constitution, which includes support for a free press.

Role of the Public Affairs Office

Your public affairs office is a valuable resource in dealing with the media. The professionals in it have considerable practical experience with various forms of media and you can rely on them to:

- **Advise** if the proposed interview is authorized, appropriate and, on balance, a good idea.
- **Research** potential interview issues, including questions likely to be asked. Assist in helping you prepare for the interview, including review of possible questions and answers and conducting one-on-one rehearsals. Make all arrangements for the interview, including ground rules, time and location.
- **Monitor** the interview, if necessary, to provide an in-house record of the interview, as well as follow-up on items to be provided later.
- **Act** as a liaison with the news organization and provide follow-up video copies, news clippings, etc., of the resulting story.
- **Provide** after-action review and feedback: did we get our message out and, if so, how effectively?

Public Affairs personnel have been trained to tell you the bad news as well as the good news. Make it easy for them to be absolutely honest, even critical, with you.

The Media Interview

The first step in the interview process is to **agree to do the interview**. A free flow of general and military information will be made available, without censorship or propaganda, to the men and women of the Armed Forces and their dependents. While many in the military are reluctant to talk to the media, it usually is in the best interest of the Marine Corps to do so. Interviews can be used to correct the record, answer the critic, or praise outstanding performance by personnel.

Having agreed to the interview, it is now time to **establish the ground rules**. When an official and a reporter meet, the ground rules must be stated clearly, understood and mutually agreed to by both parties before the interview begins.

Establish the parameters of the interview. Be very clear about what you will or will not talk about. It is perfectly legitimate to request a list of potential topic areas in advance. Remember that once you have given permission for a civilian interview, you have given up the right to censor what is written or broadcast. The best rule of thumb to avoid embarrassment is to grant only “on-the-record” interviews. There is no such thing as an “off-the-record” interview.

Types of Interviews

There are several types of news media interviews. Circumstances can range from an impromptu or pre-scheduled encounter on a routine subject to an accident, incident, crisis or contingency situation. Often, no two situations will be alike. By mastering certain basic techniques, however, you will be well prepared for most interview situations. Some types of interviews you may be exposed to include:

General Interview: Normally a one-on-one encounter. A reporter will request an interview with an officer, either in connection with a specific event (unit homecoming), or issue (allegations of sexual

harassment in the command). A decision on whether to grant the interview is made on a case by-case basis. How sensitive is the issue? Is the area beyond the responsibility of the person to be interviewed? If so, refer news media to the appropriate official. Never talk about an issue that is outside of your jurisdiction or above your rank. It has become routine for the command's PAO to monitor and record the interview. The recording is useful if questions arise later on the context of answers, etc.

Accidents, Incidents, Crises and Contingencies:

Accidents, incidents or crises can present some of the most difficult media encounters you may experience during your career. Extensive property damage, injury or even loss of life may have occurred. A contingency operation involving Marine forces may be underway or imminent. These situations are usually dramatic: the confusing of an accident scene, a fire raging with a rescue in progress of Marines hitting the beach. It is important to realize that the excitement surrounding such events will attract bystanders, as well as the media. The excitement may also be visual, in which case still and motion camera photographers may represent a majority of the media present. Their presence alone will attract attention and the situation can begin to quickly feed on itself. The already emotionally charged atmosphere will intensify, especially if the media begins to believe that they are being denied information, including access to the site, interviews with the participants, etc., for reasons other than safety or the needs of an operation or investigation.

Situational Control

There are several steps that can be taken to gain and keep control of the situation:

Make a brief statement: Normal procedure calls for the senior officer present to make a brief statement or take a few questions at the earliest opportunity. This can vary depending on the type of story and the proximity of news deadlines. A small amount of consideration can establish trust and defuse concerns or rumors as to what is actually happening. Remember: the media feels an obligation to keep the public informed and your respect for their position will go a long way.

Keep the press informed: Media are present because they, just like you, have a job to do. At a minimum, let the media know your plans in as much detail as practicable. Don't make a big deal out of it. It's usually best to keep it informal and let them know as much as you can tell them about what is happening. If you do, don't be surprised if they try to keep you informed.

Be aware of what the press can do: As a commander, don't overlook the press' ability to assist you in reaching out to Marine Corps families and to the public. The press can help you acknowledge those involved; single out those who made special contributions; inform the public as to actions they need to take; or assure them appropriate action is being taken.

Developing Your Interview Answers

The single most important control factors of most news medium are "time" and "content." Simply put, most news organizations don't have enough time to get into the detail. A videotape of your interview will be rushed to the studio, often by microwave or satellite, edited, and shown, all probably in less than 12 hours. A lengthy newspaper interview will probably be condensed into 10-20 inches of news print column.

The condensation is most dramatic with television. Editors of a half hour news show must usually condense several hours of news stories and video footage into a 22-minute show. To accomplish this, the high points of a story, and the best photos, will be condensed into succinct segments, generally less than 30 seconds in length. As a rule, more than an hour of film will generate about 60 seconds of usable footage.

You must be prepared to express any one of your major points in short 10-20 second statements. By organizing your thoughts, you make it more likely that your position will be understood by the reporter and less likely that you will be misunderstood. Put your message up front! If you want to elaborate or explain your answer in detail, go ahead, but do so only after the main points have been established.

These limitations must be addressed when planning for an interview. Commanders, in particular, must be sensitive to certain topical issues

that will be routinely brought up in media interviews. In addition, specific areas of command concern or subjects noted by the interviewer prior to the interview must be anticipated and evaluated.

Don't try to memorize a response. Develop an understanding of the one or two main points, which will be the focus of your answer. Then, work to condense those main points into a 20 to 30 second statements. Pre-planned answers that are triggered by an interviewer's question will result in the delivery of accurate, concise information. Experience has shown information received through the television medium, in particular, must be singular and short. Plan all your messages in 30 second "bites." If you can't be short and to the point, you don't know your subject well enough to communicate it!

Controlling the Interview

To control the course and content of an interview, prepare for it by identifying and organizing pre-determined, positive messages. No matter what the interviewer asks, you should feel free to steer your response to the related message. The key is to develop your messages and learn the techniques you will need to deliver them.

Developing Your Messages

No matter the event, you need to develop positive messages. This is not always easy, but it must be done. Consider a "worst case" scenario: an aircraft accident involving loss of life. Although it is difficult to expand on the positive aspects of negative events, it can be done. This is always the best method for dealing with a difficult issue. Being "positive" does not mean that you try to downplay an event; only that you accentuate how you feel - that you are concerned, for instance, or what you are doing about it - such as taking immediate action. For example, if an aviation mishap occurs:

- Express the Marine Corps' concern for the personnel involved.
- Emphasize that we take any accident seriously and that a thorough investigation will be started immediately.

- Discuss the importance of ongoing aviation safety programs and provide factual information on the safety record of the type of aircraft involved to reassure the families of those still flying in similar aircraft.

In short, by assuming an assertive and positive attitude, you will not be victimized by events no matter how disastrous. Always answer questions with your primary “messages” in mind and look for opportunities to deliver them.

In most cases, you will not be confronting a disaster but it is just as important to develop positive messages and the means to deliver them. You must determine what is important to the public or to your audience about the planned news story. Different stories and situations will always call for different messages. For instance:

- Training stories. Why is the training being conducted? Who benefits? How? When? Are there pictures or visual images that help tell the story? If so, tell the reporter.

Techniques for Controlling the Interview

Packaging/Bundling. Quantify your information and tie it together giving the reporter verbal clues to follow.

Example: “There are three new programs we’ve started this year to enhance aviation safety.”

Bridging. Verbal maneuvering to what you want to talk about (your communications objective). The reporter may not understand or know the entire issue, whereas you have years of experience. A bridge must be valid, but does not have to be fancy.

Examples:

- “What concerns me even more...”
- “In my experience...”
- “The critical issue is...”
- “That’s one perspective...”
- “I’ve heard that, but the real focus should be...”

Interview Do's and Don'ts

- Treat the media, as you would want others to treat you.
- If you are distant and hostile with the media, you'll get what you give. Media need and want information. Whether you cooperate or not, they will do a story! Commands that are accessible and sensitive to a reporter's need for information will generate credibility and create a good working relationship.
- Give the main point or points and then support it. Don't feel you have to keep talking. Make the interviewer keep the conversation going.
- Do not answer with just a simple "yes" or "no," or "no comment." Don't be curt. There is no such thing as a dumb question.
- The best defense is a good offense. Be proactive. Let your deeds speak. Accentuate the positive.
- Discuss only matters you have direct knowledge of. Avoid hypothetical situations. Remember, there is no such thing as a personal opinion when you are speaking for the Marine Corps.
- You aren't obligated to tell everything you know. Some things are better left unsaid.
- If you can't answer the question, give a reason why. There's nothing wrong with "I don't know" or "I can't answer that for security reasons." Avoid "No Comment." To many reporters and the public, it may falsely suggest that there is more truth to the issue than you may wish to discuss. Don't pretend to be perfect. Admitting mistakes from time to time demonstrates candor and the integrity of our organization.
- Complete your answer within 30 seconds if possible, then elaborate or expand if you feel it's required.
- Do not use acronyms, technical terms or Marine jargon.

- If you wish to change or drop a topic, build in a cutoff in your answer. This is an opportune time to take the offensive and bring up the topic you want to talk about. Remember you have control.
- Take time to analyze the question and form the answer in your mind. Do not feel you have to answer instantaneously. Do not just start talking while you formalize the answer or you may talk yourself into a corner.
- Answer only one question at a time. If the question has more than one part, answer in the order you feel comfortable. If you forget part of the question, or are not clear on the meaning, ask to have it repeated.
- Do not repeat a question, or waste time with stock phrases. Comments such as “That’s a good question” or “I’m glad you asked me that” are unnecessary.
- Be careful what you say and how you say it. Do not be overly defensive. Remember, this can be a positive, enjoyable experience. It’s up to you.
- Pick out two or three points you want to emphasize and watch for places within the interview to transition to your subject.
- Truth is mandatory. The smallest lie will be discovered and will be immediately harmful. It will produce distrust and destroy your credibility. Remember the public has a right to know the truth.
- Avoid repeating or using “color words” that may have a negative connotation. Words such as “massacre,” “scandal,” “deaths,” “corruption,” etc., induce overly strong, emotional reactions and may be counterproductive to your objectives. (For more information on “color words,” see Appendix F.)
- If the interviewer is hostile, don’t assume his or her attitude.
- Don’t get angry or lose your temper. Control the interview: the audience will only see your angry answer, not the question that instigated it.

- Do not use, or repeat unverified terminology or “facts” given by a reporter, unless you are positive of their accuracy. Politely correct a reporter if you know the real facts. State that you are not aware of the validity of questionable figures or if you have not personally verified the accuracy of the referenced information. By using incorrect information or failing to challenge erroneous facts, the public will associate them with you and assume they are true.

• The Cardinal Rule: **“THERE IS NO SUCH THING AS OFF THE RECORD.”**

It is the reporter’s job to use any and all available sources and information for a story. Watch out for the “hot mike.” Assume the camera is always “on” and the mike is always “hot”. The interview begins as soon as you make contact with the reporter. Anything you say quickly becomes public property.

Follow Up

Don’t forget to tie up loose ends after the interview. Ensure your staff follows through on securing any information that you said you would find out. Inform your interviewer that you are available for additional information or clarification if needed.

Public Speaking

Speaking before a group of concerned citizens is the most effective way to tell the Marine Corps story. You can more effectively interact with each of the audience members because they can physically see and hear you. You are able to observe the audience and can react to their feedback and modify your comments accordingly.

Before accepting any speaking engagement, do your homework

- Is the audience right? (For example, you should not, as an active duty Marine, address a partisan political group, or any organization which would be considered extremist, and potentially embarrass yourself and the Marine Corps.) Do not accept an invitation unless you are

going to be proud of your association - in uniform - with the group. Your PAO can help you with good advice and contacts.

- While researching your audience, tailor your message to their needs:
 - Is any Marine Corps issue a topic of interest? Or, do they want something specific? (For example, a local plant produces specific weapons system or parts for it?)
 - Is there anything that could offend them? Will they be a friendly audience?

Dealing effectively with speech delivery requires many of the same components as the media interview. Your speeches, audience or subject matter, may require the use of a verbatim manuscript (when dealing with sensitive or classified material) or may just require casual notes to jog your memory on main points. In any case, the goal to communicate your story remains the same: remember to talk to the group as though it is a living room conversation; pick out several people around the room; and concentrate on those people as you speak.

Speeches tend to make the speaker distant, formal, authoritarian and not real or likable. Consciously avoid this tendency. Be friendly, warm and human. Some important points:

- Have something important to say! Pick a definite topic and research it. Organize your main points.
- Know your audience. Know their interests. Check on previous programs. Determine the occasion.
- If possible, check out the speaking location ahead of time, or have someone do it for you (the podium, the microphone, the water glass, etc.).
- Arrive early enough to mingle with hosts and audience.
- Although the event you may be attending includes a cocktail or social hour, don't drink before your speech.

- Recognize notable civic or other leaders in the audience during introductory remarks.
- Keep your talk around 20 minutes, but no longer than half an hour.
- Prepare all speeches triple-spaced using large type and ALL CAPS. Underline or use a highlighter for your key points.
- Don't carry sentences from one page to another. Don't staple pages together.
- Avoid Marine jargon and acronyms.
- Don't make public promises or extend invitations to the audience to visit your unit unless you mean it.

Members of the media are the link between the Marine Corps and the public. They form the conduit of communication that is vital in keeping a flow of accurate and timely information to the American public. This information is the bedrock of the public's perception of the Marine Corps.

It is the responsibility of each Marine, and particularly those who deal directly with the media, to become familiar with the process and feel comfortable in this environment. As a spokesperson for the Corps, you must keep the conduit free of obstruction by providing honest and accurate information to the public.

Remember that your Public Affairs Officer is your local media expert and can provide the best advice before, during and after your interview. Seek his or her counsel and take advantage of their experience with the media.

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APPENDIX A

INTERVIEW DECISION PROCESS CHECKLIST 7 STEPS FOR DECISION

Step 1: CONDUCT A BASIC SEARCH

- Determine the reporter's purpose.
- Determine your purpose: Why conduct the interview?
- Determine the reporter's background: How well does he or she know the issues?
- Consult with your boss and the PAO.
- Are you the right person to do the interview?

Step 2: DEVELOP YOUR COMMUNICATION OBJECTIVE

- Create a message geared to the reporter's audience.

Step 3: RESEARCH POTENTIAL QUESTIONS

- Brainstorm: Look for questions you won't like.
- Look for local angle on national issues.

Step 4: PREPARE WRITTEN ANSWERS TO EACH QUESTION

- Don't try to "ad lib" during the interview.
- Review written responses, use staff as necessary.
- Answer from the audiences perspective.
- Keep answers simple and concise: If you can't write simple sentences, you don't understand the issue.

Step 5: REHEARSE ANSWERS OUT LOUD

- Practice with a mirror, home videocassette, TAVSC.

Step 6: PRIMARY RULES OF ENGAGEMENT

- Level the playing field
- Establish subject, length, location, time and date.
- Establish subjects not open for discussion.
- Anticipate requirements: Video? Photographer?

Step 7: CONDUCT THE INTERVIEW

APPENDIX B

RULES OF ENGAGEMENT

1. Reconfirm the interview topic.
2. Establish subjects not open for discussion. Most journalists understand and respect ground rules.
3. Determine both yours and the reporter's deadline.
4. Expect some give and take.
5. Find out if reporter has other sources. Set length, location, and date a half hour is normally sufficient.)
6. Remember that the environment can help set interview tone.
7. Ask if there will be a photographer if print media is interviewing you.
8. It is alright to tape the interview. It is a matter of accurate record, not a matter of mistrust.
9. It's okay to ask when the story will appear.
10. It's okay to have pre-interview discussion:
 - Puts both parties at ease.
 - Helps determine the reporter's knowledge.
 - Can determine reporter's slant on story.

REMEMBER: Even during a pre-interview discussion, you should operate under the principle that the cameras are always "rolling" and that the microphone is always "hot."

11. Don't ask for a copy of the story/videotape.
12. Don't ask to proofread or edit story.

APPENDIX C

FREEDOM OF INFORMATION ACT

This is a disclosure law, which provides public access to records in the possession or control of the Executive Branch of the federal government. The primary federal guidance on release of information in the Executive Department is contained in the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA). An understanding of the FOIA provides the basic knowledge on federal release of information policy.

The FOIA is a disclosure law, which says all information in the possession of the government is releasable except for nine specific categories of information. Further, the act does not require that exempted information be withheld, but rather permits it to be withheld. Public affairs officers do not decide whether exempted information will be released, but they should understand that the spirit of this primary guidance is to release, not withhold.

The Act includes nine exemptions or reasons allowing the government to refuse to disclose information. The exemptions are guidelines PAOs use to help determine whether to release information immediately, or to seek additional guidance.

The exemptions are:

- Bank Reports
- Oil and Gas Well Data
- National Security
- Internal Agency Rules
- Exempt by Other Statute
- Trade Secrets
- Inter-Agency or Intra-Agency Memoranda or Letters
- Personal and Medical Files and Law Enforcement Information, if released would:
 - Interfere with law enforcement proceedings
 - Deprive a person of a fair trial
 - Constitute an unwarranted invasion of privacy
 - Disclose the identity of a confidential source
 - Disclose investigative techniques
 - Endanger the life or safety of a law enforcement official

APPENDIX D

GUIDANCE ON RELEASE OF INFORMATION UNDER THE PRIVACY ACT

a. Decedents: The definition of the term “individual” in the Privacy Act clearly implies that status only applies to living persons.

b. Age (Date of Birth): Releasable.

c. Home of Record/Present Address: No general rule for the disclosure on an individual’s home of record. However, home of record may usually be released if no street address is given. In most cases, in response to questions, an individual’s present geographic location, i.e., Clinton, Maryland, may be provided but not the individual’s street address. Whenever feasible, the desires of the individual or next-of-kin, with regard to disclosure of the home of record or present geographic location, should be considered.

d. Marital Status/Dependents: The fact that an individual is married (or not married) is disclosable, as it is a matter of public record and is disclosable under FOIA. Names, ages, and sex of dependents may also be released. Service regulations vary on the release of this information.

e. Awards and Decorations/Citations: Releasable.

f. Race: In most cases, not releasable. To release information from departmental records regarding race may constitute an unwarranted invasion of privacy. It is recognized, however, that on occasion a specific request may be made for such information in circumstances in which it is relevant, e.g., a racially oriented protest or altercation. Where the fact of an individual’s race is relevant in providing essential facts to the press, it may be released.

g. Character of Discharge: (1) Administrative. Not releasable. The character of discharges resulting from administrative processing is not a matter of public record. Do not release any indication of whether a discharge is honorable, general or undesirable. The Department of Defense has gone to great lengths to preserve the confidentiality of the character of the discharge. The release of this information to the gen-

eral public has thus been viewed as an unwarranted invasion of personal privacy and not releasable under the Privacy Act unless the individual provides his written consent.

(2) Punitive: Releasable. In the case of discharges resulting from courts-martial, the proceedings and record are public. Therefore, the approved sentence subsequent clemency action, if any, is releasable.

h. Duty Status. Releasable. Release of information such as the fact of unauthorized absence/desertion, hospitalization, in hands of civil authorities awaiting trial, and confinement by military authorities awaiting trial is permitted.

i. Decisions of Personnel Boards: Releasable after decision by final approving authority, if the board action applies to a category of persons, as opposed to an individual. Otherwise, not releasable.

(1) Results of personnel board actions that affect groups such as promotion boards and augmentation boards are releasable.

(2) The results of personnel board actions, which affect individual, such as administrative discharge boards and aviator flight boards are not generally releasable. The results of the latter category of boards have not been traditionally released, the board proceedings are not public, and the nature of the action taken, often averse, warrants preservation of its confidentiality. That information may be confirmed which has become a matter of public knowledge through the action of the individual or his counsel.

j. Photographs in the Custody of the Department of Defense: Photographs of DoD military and civilian personnel taken for official purposes are generally releasable unless the photograph depicts matters that if disclosed to public view would constitute a clearly unwarranted invasion of personal privacy. Generally, award ceremony photographs and similar photographs are releasable.

APPENDIX E

BASIC ON-THE-AIR TIPS

Here is a common sense checklist to review as you plan to go “on-the-air.” These tips are aimed at a television interview but could also apply to photographs for a newspaper.

Uniform: Wear attire appropriate to the subject and the setting. Normally, a freshly pressed service uniform although a uniform of the day is acceptable when the interview is conducted aboard base in a working area.

Men: If blouse and tie: Make sure your tie is straight and the knot pulled up; sit on the tail of your blouse and empty your pockets to prevent wrinkling at the collar or bulges. Wear over the calf socks.

Women: If skirt or blouse: Make sure your tie tabs and blouse are straight; adjust the hem of your skirt at the knee. If seated, do not cross your legs; sit slightly forward in the chair with your legs angled toward the interviewer to give a streamlined appearance.

Insignia: Check your ribbons, badges, rank insignias, belt, buttons and shoe shine. You may want to ask the production crew to dull the shine of your brass, rank insignia and badges to avoid reflecting studio lights.

Make-up: The purpose of wearing make-up is not to make you look good-it is to prevent you from looking bad! Television lights “white-out” skin colors or produce undesirable “glares.” Without makeup, you may also appear to “glow” with perspiration and, if your hairline is receding, the top of your head will shine. While most Marines may feel uncomfortable, it is entirely appropriate, and makes good sense, to ask for make-up on your forehead or face prior to a television interview. Female Marines with normal makeup are usually fine; when in doubt, ask the TV people and go with their recommendations.

Eyewear: Do not wear sunglasses outdoors or tinted/photo-grey glasses indoors. If you wear glasses, wear rims that will allow viewers to see

your eyes. If you decide not to wear your glasses during the interview, remove them about 20 minutes prior to the interview to allow your eyes to adjust. Ask makeup to check your nose for marks from the glasses.

Camera angle: It's best to position yourself at a slight angle to the camera to avoid a full-front or side profile. This will positively accentuate your presence and is more comfortable for the audience.

Guard your flanks: Don't sit or stand between two questioners, particularly if they are hostile. It's always best to place yourself on one end or the other. Never be in the middle: if you pay attention to the person speaking (and you should), your eyes will end up going back and forth and you will not look your best. At the same time, keep your eyes up; don't look down (the guilty look).

If seated: Pick a non-swivel, stable, straight back chair to avoid movement during the session. Do not sit back or let yourself get too comfortable. Don't slouch: a slight degree of discomfort will help you stay mentally and physically alert. It's also best to lean forward slightly and maintain eye contact with the interviewer. Keep your legs together and, if you want to cross your legs, men may generally do so but only at the knee.

If standing: Assume a stable, comfortable position at an angle to the camera, facing the interviewer. Stand tall with toes slightly pigeon-toed to the center to avoid rocking back and forth.

Microphone: Allow the camera crew to get you "wired." Avoid touching or breathing into the mike; keep the cord hidden.

Physical gestures: Feel comfortable using natural hand gestures for emphasis, but don't overdo it. Avoid nervous habits such as tapping feet, drumming fingers, playing with pens, etc. Your most important gesture is always paying respectful attention to the interviewer and demonstrating your sincerity and honesty by maintaining appropriate eye contact. You don't have to be serious at all times, but be careful not to smile or nod at the wrong time out of discomfort.

Personal Issues: If you have a hearing problem, a difficulty understanding, nervousness or a physical reason for desiring one profile over another, make this known to the producer of the program in advance.

Understanding media production: You will enhance your understanding of these issues by taking advantage of your interview opportunity to learn about the media's working tools. Arrive early. Feel free to show an interest in the production. Look over the set and learn the limitations of the equipment.

Contact with interviewer: The importance of maintaining respectful eye contact cannot be overstated. Be sincere. Once the interview starts, forget the cameras and talk to - not at - the interviewer. Concentrate only on him or her. Use the interviewer's first name if you know the interviewer and feel comfortable doing so.

Relax. After all, you are the expert and the person best able to deal with your subject.

Tips for field interviews

Check your uniform for proper fit. Are you wearing it correctly? Ensure that you are wearing your 782 gear correctly and that all buckles, snaps, Velcro, etc., are fastened. Make sure, if wearing a helmet, that your chinstrap is fastened. If there is any questionable writing on your "cat eyes," be sure to remove, or replace it.

If covered, tilt your cover, or helmet, back just enough so that the audience can see your eyes without any shadow.

Do not wear sunglasses; or, if in a tent, tinted/photo-grey glasses. If you wear glasses, adjust them so they are angled down somewhat. This prevents glare from the camera lights and allows the viewers to see your eyes. A slight angle will be enough to prevent glare and will be almost unnoticeable to the viewer.

Quickly check your background for classified or sensitive items.

Know your subject. Even if you are an expert, bone up on the latest facts and have them fresh in your mind and accurate.

Before the interview, check out the latest TV or radio news report or read the latest paper to become aware of a late breaking story that could affect the content of the interview.

Learn about the media's working tools. Look over their equipment and ask questions. Show an interest in their work and learn the limitations of their equipment.

If possible, watch them interview somebody else. Again, ask questions. What are they looking for in an interview? What kind of story are they trying to put together? Offer subjects or points you want to discuss. Set the ground rules and time allowed.

Anticipate questions and formulate responses. If you have a little time before the interview, have the PAO play "devil's advocate."

APPENDIX F

COLOR WORDS

afraid	despair	mangled	tampering
alarmed	desperation	mangy	tense
anger	despicable	massacre	terrified
angry	destroy	mean	terror-stricken
antagonize	destructive	messy	terrorized
anxious	disappointed	miserable	threatened
appalled	discontented		toxic
appalling	discouraged	nag	tragic
apprehensive	discrimination	negligent	traitor
argue	disgusted		
ashamed	distorted	outrageous	ugly
attack	disturbed	overwhelmed	underhanded
			undermined
bad	embarrassed	panicky	uneasy
betrayed	embellished	petrified	unhappy
blame	exposed	pitiful	unsure
blasted		poisonous	
bombs	fight		weird
bored	foolish	regret	worried
botched	frightened	resentful	
brainwashed	furious	resigned	
\bungled		rotten	
	greed		
catastrophe		sabotage	
confused	harassed	sad	
contempt	hopeless	scandal	
corrosive	hostile	scared	
corrupt	humiliated	scum	
cover-up	hurt	self pity	
cringe		shame	
crooked	immature	shatter	
	inappropriate	sick	
danger	investigate	skunk	
deadly	irritated	slash	
deaths	litigate	stampede	
demean		struggle	
deny	mad	stupid	

APPENDIX G

THE 10 RULES OF GOOD MEDIA RELATIONS

- 1. Talk from public's viewpoint, not service perspective.**
 - Avoid jargon, acronyms.
 - Use language that the public will understand.
- 2. Speak in terms of personal experiences whenever possible.**
 - Use examples people can relate to.
- 3. If you don't want to see a statement quoted, don't make it.**
 - Nothing is ever "off the record". Avoid the phrase "no comment" which leads to suspicion or that we are trying to hide something.
- 4. Lead with most important message.**
- 5. Don't argue or get mad.**
 - Makes you appear defensive, unprofessional.
 - Outbursts create drama, becomes part of the story.
- 6. Restate objectionable comments in terms favorable to you.**
- 7. Don't ramble.**
- 8. "I don't know" isn't a bad answer.**
 - Shows you're not trying to be evasive. Never speculate. Try to find the answer and provide it in a timely fashion.
- 9. Don't shade the truth, even a little.**
 - A lie becomes the story. You will have no credibility.
- 10. Tell media what they expect and need to know, and no more.**

APPENDIX H

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Resources at Your Local Public Affairs Office

- “Marine Corps Public Affairs Strategy”
- Marine Corps News Summary
- Tapes and videos of past interviews
- Point/Talking Papers
- CMC and other General Officer Speeches
- Public Affairs Guidance
- White Letters
- ALMARS

APPENDIX I

COMMUNICATIONS OBJECTIVES EXAMPLE WORKSHEET Summary of Events/Subject

LCpl. Jason Rother, 19, Minneapolis, Minn., died in the desert at Twentynine Palms on or about 31 Aug. '88. Skeletal remains were found about 2 miles from where he had last been seen. The investigation put the blame for his death on a "total breakdown" in leadership and accountability at the small unit level. Rother was posted alone, contrary to orders, as a route guide for his battalion's night motor march across 21 miles of desert. For some reason, he was not picked up with the other guides and his absence was not discovered for 2 days.

COMMUNICATION OBJECTIVES/MESSAGE

MAIN POINTS: Story/Example/Description(simple, plain language statements you want to get across)

CONCERN: Taking action. Accountability reemphasized. Personal interest/caring. Body language.

CANDOR: Admit breakdown/confusion. Clearly state the story.

UNIQUENESS: Never happened before. Not the usual case, although training exposes Marines to risks.

NOTES:

Your objectives/messages should be positive. Particularly for controversial or negative subjects, critics and detractors will be contacted for their views. If you don't bring out the positive points what the Marine Corps has done/is doing right - no one else will.

Answers that work: (1) Contain a communications objective/message - brief, simple, plain language statement; (2) Has the usage up front; (3) Emphasizes benefits versus features, people not programs; (4) Story-like: jokes, anecdotes that have a beginning, middle and end are usually people oriented, personal experiences (5) Contain few negative words, are essentially positive; (6) Are not disparaging towards any organization or individual.

APPENDIX J

HOW TO MAKE THE BEST OF BAD NEWS How to Assess the Damage and How to Make it Worse

If you determine you have been wronged in a news story or that inaccurate or misleading reporting has taken place you must decide if you want to take action. Your decision should be based on the answers to the following checklist:

Bad news correction checklist:

- Is it important enough to correct or would a correction amount to nit-picking?
- Just how damaging is the charge, criticism or error?
- Will a correction simply give greater visibility to an opposite point of view?
- Is a correction worth a restatement of the entire problem, including the error, to the new audiences?
- Is it possible to reach the identical audience originally exposed to the error?
- Did you respond promptly and accurately to the media inquiries, which led to the story?

The more of these elements that apply, the more likely it is that you should seek correction, clarification, or retraction. However, we recommend that you proceed only if your situation meets at least four of the six criteria above.

Making bad news worse:

- Lose your temper.
- Phone the offending medium and demand a meeting with the management at which you threaten everything from withholding advertising to bodily harm.
- Call the reporter and demand a retraction.
- File a lawsuit.

Any of the above is a sure-fire way to make bad news worse.

