

# The Military and the Media



INVESTICE DO ROZVOJE VZDĚLÁVÁNÍ

Operační program Vzdělávání pro konkurenceschopnost

Název projektu: Inovace magisterského studijního programu Fakulty ekonomiky a managementu

Registrační číslo projektu: CZ.1.07/2.2.00/28.0326

## Warm-up

*Work in pairs*

- How can media coverage of a conflict benefit the military?
- What are the risks for journalists who report from war zones?
- What can journalists do to reduce these risks?

# The Military and the Media

Few people in the military today can argue that we do not need the media. Firstly, media coverage of military operations has a direct effect on public opinion and most would agree that we need public Understanding, support and funds and that we deserve public recognition for our successes. Furthermore, we all know that the media can influence political decisions regarding military operations. Thirdly the media has undeniable strategic value either in simply making soldiers feel good about the work that they do or by influencing the enemy. Finally, in many societies it is recognized that the public have a right to know what their military is doing. As US Marine Corps General W. Boomer wrote, *The American people need to know what happens in war. After all, they pay our salaries.*

Military-media relations experienced a number of changes during the last century. Perhaps the most significant of these is the idea of independence. During WWII, journalists saw themselves as part of their country's war effort. This has now changed and journalists now see themselves as independent with a mission to report what they see – good and bad, successes and failures.

Another major change has been embedding reporters with military units. *Embeds* are journalists that eat, sleep and ride with troops and even accompany them on missions. There is a general feeling that embedding reporters has been a success, however, it is not without problems – the main problem is operational security when embeds have access to soldiers on the ground, often without the presence of an army public affairs officer, together with mobile communications technology. In practice, countries that have experimented with embeds have had few problems. This is because first of all, censorship is self-imposed and journalists are given a list of the things they can or cannot report on. Secondly, because embeds are usually selected from national media or at least from friendly countries. And thirdly, because embeds rely on the unit that they are travelling with for their own security – if they disclose the unit's location, they put themselves in danger. Finally, and perhaps most importantly, the military have operated *security at source* – training and then trusting soldiers not to reveal classified information. In effect, this means that every soldier is a public affairs officer.

Resource: Mellor-Clark S.: Campaign



INVESTICE DO ROZVOJE VZDĚLÁVÁNÍ

*Answer the questions:*

- 1 What important changes in military-media relations does the author write about?
- 2 Why might embeds represent a threat to operational security?
- 3 According to the author, why do embeds rarely represent a threat to operational security?
- 4 What is *security at source*?

*Work in pairs. Discuss the questions.*

- 1 If your country was involved in a conflict, would you ...
  - a) embed journalists only from your national media?
  - b) embed journalists from your own country and allies?
  - c) embed journalists from the international media?
  - d) not embed journalists?
- 2 Should the military make public its failures as well as its successes?
- 3 Would you let junior officers, NCOs and soldiers talk directly to the media?

## Grammar – clauses introduced by *that*

*Embeds are journalists **that** eat, sleep and ride with troops.*

*This means **that** every soldier is a public affairs officer.*

*In many societies it is recognized **that** the public have a right to know what their military is doing.*

*Few people in the military today can argue **that** we do not need the media.*

*There is a general feeling **that** embedding has been a success ...*

**We use clauses introduced by *that* ...**

**1 in relative clauses to specify who or what we are talking about.**

**2 with verbs like *mean* and *suggest* to talk about effects and consequences.**

**3 after adjectives or passive verbs that comment on the situation.**

**4 to report what someone says with reporting verbs like *say*, *argue* or *agree*.**

**5 after nouns like *feeling* or *belief* that show what people say or think.**

*the system encourages reporters to identify too closely with the soldiers **that** they re living with*

**We can leave out *that* when it is the object of a relative clause or with reporting verbs like *say* or *tell*. We do not leave out *that* when it is the subject of a relative clause or with more formal reporting verbs.**

## Grammar – clauses introduced by *that*

*Complete the text with **that**.*

The system of embedding has meant it is now possible for journalists to report in real time on battlefield events. However, many journalists argue the system encourages reporters to identify too closely with the soldiers they are living with, and this is another way of controlling what is reported.

## Journalists go back to school

It was a cold afternoon and I was one of 12 journalists travelling in a press convoy along a quiet country road. As the convoy turned a corner, our driver stopped. A blue van was blocking the road and we were suddenly surrounded by a group of armed masked gunmen. One of them opened the car door. He ordered us to get out of the vehicle and told us to line up. Another gunman then forced me to get down on the ground and put a hood over my head. One of my colleagues started protesting. A gunman fired his weapon and shouted *The rest of you shut up and get down!* After that, nobody moved or said a word. The silence was terrifying. After 10 minutes I was having problems breathing. I tried to loosen my hood but a hand came down hard on my back. Suddenly the hood was pulled off my head. I look around and all my colleagues were safe. The 'kidnappers' had also taken off their hoods and they were smiling.

This was not a real kidnapping. In fact, I was on a five-day hostile environment course for journalists. With an alarming increase in the number of deaths of journalists in recent years, these kinds of courses have become so popular that some news agencies will not allow journalists to travel to war zones unless they have done a recognized training course.

The Hostile Environment and Emergency First Aid Training course aims to teach you how to identify and avoid risks in hostile areas. Like the kidnapping exercise, the training is practical and realistic. The instructors are Mostly former British Royal Marines with years of battlefield experience. During the course, they taught us to recognize and react to threats like sniper fire, incoming artillery and mortar rounds and mines. We also learned to deal with dangerous situations like kidnappings and riots. The course put a very strong emphasis on first aid and we spent more than two days learning how to deal with major wounds caused by bullets and explosives. Again, the training was practical and in the final exercise we had to extract to injured colleagues from a minefield, treat their wounds and avoid getting blown up ourselves.

**Resource: Mellor-Clark S.: Campaign**



INVESTICE DO ROZVOJE VZDĚLÁVÁNÍ

*Answer the questions:*

- 1 What happened to the writer when he was travelling in the press convoy?
- 2 Who attends the Hostile Environment and Emergency First Aid Training course?
- 3 Why do some news agencies require staff to attend the course?
- 4 Who are the instructors of the course?
- 5 What do students learn on the course?

*Explain the following words and phrases in English:*

press convoy, to force, kidnapper, war zone, hostile environment, to avoid risks,  
marines, battlefield experience, threat, sniper fire, mortar rounds, riots, major wounds,  
to treat the wound, minefield

## Speaking

*Work in pairs.*

*Develop a five-day learning course for journalists who are deploying with your unit on a peacekeeping mission in a war-torn country.*

*Now compare your list with another group.*

*Say what advice you would give the journalists deploying to war zones.*

## Exercises

*a) Match the words with the definitions.*

black out    correspondent    embed    operational security    public affairs officer

1 A journalist who lives and travels with a military unit on an operational tour.

2 A staff officer with responsibility for relations with the media.

3 Protection of important military information.

4 A journalist who reports for a radio or television station.

5 When a military unit decides not to use communications equipment.

# Vague language

*Study the examples.*

*they have **a very significant number of** casualties and very large numbers of wounded*

**We use words like *about, approximately, significant, a large number of* and *or so* to give imprecise numbers.**

*All I can tell you about our location is that we re **in the vicinity of** the main supply route.*

**We use *in the vicinity of* to give an imprecise location.**

*A Marine APC was destroyed **by some kind of** explosive device*

**We use *kind of, sort of and type of* to talk about general class.**

*we ve just come under automatic machine gun fire from **somewhere** over to our left.*

**We use *someone, somebody, something, sometime* and *somewhere* when we do not know , or do not want to give details.**

## Writing

*Work in pairs.*

b) **Vague language.** Replace the underlined words and phrases. Use these words and phrases.

(a) few    in the vicinity    significant    some kind of    someone    sometime

I have just spoken to (1) Major Singh at the battalion HQ and he told me that the rebels attacked the Malaysian Battalion (2) at 2200 hrs last night. It appears that the rebels used (3) MILAN anti-tank weapons in the attack. The Malaysians were patrolling (4) four kilometres south of Bazu when they were ambushed. Initial reports suggest that the Malaysians suffered (5) two casualties. The rebels took (6) twenty-four casualties.

# Questions? Suggestions?

## Thanks for your attention.



INVESTICE DO ROZVOJE VZDĚLÁVÁNÍ