Valentin Areh

VOJAŠKA STRATEŠKA POLITIKA UPRAVLJANJA MEDIJEV – OSEBNE IZKUŠNJE IZ RAZLIČNIH VOJN

STRATEGIC MILITARY NEWS MANAGEMENT POLICY – PERSONAL EXPERIENCES FROM DIFFERENT WARS

Povzetek   Vloga množičnih medijev v zahodnih demokracijah je ključnega pomena za obliko-vanje javnega mnenja, ki se uporablja na volitvah za podporo ali zavrnitev vojaških ukrepov, ki jih predlaga vlada. Zaradi javne in politične narave vojaških operacij je postalo nujno, da vojaški poveljniki množične medije učinkovito vključijo v opera-tivno delovanje in tako dosežejo svoje cilje. Operativni poveljnik in njegovo osebje morajo imeti dovolj natančne smernice za vključitev upravljanja medijev v opera-tivne načrte. Avtor kot vojni dopisnik predstavlja svoje izkušnje iz različnih vojn ter napake in primere dobre prakse iz različnih vojsk. Glede na njegove osebne izkušnje je najbolje razvit in izpiljen koncept odnosov z javnostmi program gostujočih medijev iz ZDA, ki se je izkazal kot uspešen tako z vidika vojske kot medijev.

Ključne besede   *Mediji, vojna, vojska, častniki za odnose z javnostmi, vojaška politika upravljanja medijev, program gostujočih medijev.*

Abstract   The role of mass media in Western democracies is crucial for public opinion, which is used in the elections to support or reject military actions proposed by the govern-ment. Because of the public and political nature of military operations, it has become essential for military commanders to make effective operational use of the mass media in order to achieve their objectives. The operational commander and his staff must have a sufficient focused guidance to permit them to integrate media manage-ment into operational plans. Author as a war correspondent presents his experiences from different wars, mistakes and best practices from different armies. According to his personal experience, the most elaborate and developed public relations concept is the U.S. "Embedded Media Program" which proved successful from the perspective of the military as well as the media.

Key words   *Media, war, armed forces, public affairs officers, military news management policy, Embedded Media Program.*

Introduction   The press and the military have different military news management policies created by different missions, as well as different goals with regard to wartime news coverage. To fully understand the term "management" it has to be defined. Most of the modern scholars define the term "management" as planning, organizing, staffing, leading and controlling. All managers at all levels of every organization perform these functions, but the amount of time a manager spends on each one depends on, both, the level of management and the specific organization (Benowitz, 2001, pp. 5, 6). Media management policy for covering armed conflicts is directed by specific mission-related goals. According to Paul and Kim (2005, pp. XV), we can talk about two main mission-related goals of media in democracies, namely to uphold obligations to the public and to achieve profit. It is editors who decide why media should cover a specific military mission and to what extent. In the beginning and at the end of the decision-making process, the same general question always occurs: is this story interesting for the public (viewers/readers/listeners)? If the public shows interest in specific stories, the media respond with more extensive coverage. If the public shows no interest at all, there are almost no stories. Nevertheless, we have to be clear and not confuse the phrase "public shows interest" with the term "public interest", which refers to the "general welfare". The exact meaning of the term "public interest" is not always clear and it is central to policy debates, politics and democracy. On the contrary, the phrase "public shows interest" is quite clear, because ratings show what kind of stories the public prefers and in what kind of stories they show less interest. Johnson (2003) has reported that average cable news viewership has tripled in the United States during the war. In the first 19 days of the war, Fox News Channel averaged 3.3 million viewers, a 236% increase from the weeks preceding the war. CNN: 2.7 million, up 313%. MSNBC: 1.4 million, up 360%. With more viewers, TV stations achieve more profit and uphold obligations to the public. We could also talk about two main mission-related goals of the military in Western democracies, namely to achieve operational success and to maintain operational security. The difference is obvious when we talk about goals for news coverage. The media want to gain access to newsworthy information; provide newsworthy information to the public; fulfil obligations to the public; build market share; as well as maintain quality of news, objectivity (tell both sides of the story), accuracy and credibility. Military goals for news coverage, on the other hand, are the following: do not allow news coverage to compromise operational security; fulfil legal obligations regarding press access; use news coverage to support military mission; obtain good public relations; build credibility and support information operations. Despite these key differences, the military and the press do share certain commonalities. Both aspire to a high level of professionalism, and both focus on serving the public, albeit in very different ways. The military exists to defend and protect the state and its territory, while the press exists to keep the public informed. Both roles are considered critical to a healthy democracy (Paul and Kim, 2005, pp. XIV, XV).

The press and the military have different missions and goals; therefore the question of media access to the battlefield has regularly generated. Why is access to the battlefield so important for the media? Media cannot afford to rely solely on military

information, but must rely on verified information. The press must seek out multiple witnesses, ask various sides for comments and use other techniques. This approach of verification is what separates journalism from propaganda. Journalists, who work for the media, must be loyal to, both, the citizens and the public interest. Their role is very important for the society, since democracy depends on citizens having reliable, accurate facts put in a meaningful context. Military commanders need to understand the purpose and function of the role of the media in war reporting: the news media should serve as an independent and honest link between the military at war and the wider civilian society it is sworn to defend. The lack of knowledge and experience of military operations as well as military personnel is a recipe for frustration, bewilderment and error (Offley and Sword, 2001, pp. 14, 15).

In this paper, we try to show different relations occurring between the military and the media, as both sides struggled to develop an approach to reporting operations. We do not discuss what kind of military news management model would be perfect for the media, because really - there is nothing to discuss. It is a fact: a war correspondent is a journalist who covers stories first-hand from a war zone; therefore it is logical that the media want nothing more than a full and unlimited access to the battlefield. From the military point of view, however, this approach could represent a security risk. Our attempt is to present our experiences regarding the type of the military news management model, which has from the point of view of, both, military commanders and the press representatives, so far proven to be the best balance between the media and the military.

1 BALANCE BETWEEN THE MILITARY AND THE PRESS

The operational commander and his staff must have a thorough understanding of the media's historical and potential role in military operations. As we can see, this role is diverse and complex as military–media relations are in Western democracies. Of course, the commander cannot afford to rely upon ingenuity and upon selective applications of lessons learned in an effort to minimize his public affairs losses and limit damage to his mission. He needs thoughtful, comprehensive doctrine which recognizes the media's presence as an operational asset and articulates the means to employ that asset to best advantage (Shaffer, 1997, p. 1). The role of media is especially important during the war; so important that we could talk about a "diffused war". The term used by Hoskins and O'Loughlin (2010, pp. 3) refers to a new paradigm of war in which the mediatisation of war enables a more diffuse causal relations between action and effect, creating greater uncertainty for policymakers in the conduct of war. Mediatisation, causality and decision-making can shape and reinforce one another in ways that make "diffused war" a coherent and intelligible paradigm.

According to Ulrich Keller (2001, p. 251), the first media war in history was the Crimean War (1853–1856). This was the first time that the public could read about the reality of warfare. Angry and shocked, the British public backlash from journalist

reports led the government to re-evaluate the treatment of troops and change some political decisions. The World War I (1914–1918), World War II (1939–1945) and Korean War (1950–1953) were characterized by rigid censorship. All states in conflicts imposed strict censorship on reporters. Patriotic coverage resulted in the full support of the people for the war effort. Only those reporters who agreed to full military censorship were given accreditation and allowed into the war theatre (Venable, 2003, pp. 66–71).

U.S. intervention in Vietnam War (1965–1973) was the first to be televised and the first of the modern era fought without military censorship. Technology enabled rapid transfer of information and images. But daily military briefings did not portray the same information that journalists had seen for themselves out in the field with the units. By 1960s and 1970s, television was present in the majority of U.S. homes, and military leaders would later blame the television news coverage in particular for eroding public support for military action in Vietnam. Since the Falklands conflict (1982), U.S. and U.K. military news management policy has been formulated as a response to the "myth of Vietnam" (Tumber and Palmer, 2004, p. 2). According to this myth, unsympathetic coverage produced by journalists with unlimited access to the battlefield and the help of technology turned public opinion against the war. Although Hallin (1989) showed this not to be the case (media coverage was only un-sympathetic at the end of the war, after American public opinion had already turned), the myth has fulfilled a useful action for the military in the U. S. and in U. K.: it le-gitimized increasing control over the media (Lewis, 2006, p. 4).

By the time of the Gulf War (1991), experience in the Falklands, Grenada (1983), and Panama (1989) had led the Pentagon and the U.S. Ministry of Defence to develop a model of news management that severely restrained the media's ability to report. The fact that restrictions were imposed both on news content and access to the war weighs the news value of the photograph, film or videotape. The military blocked journalists' access to the war zone. In the Gulf War (1991), the media were unsat-isfied, attacking the U. S. government for restrictions over the press. Public affairs officers grouped journalists who wanted access to the military units into small pools with escort officers, and the military units provided the transportation. Limitations on the transportation and the vast distances covered in the operation resulted in many journalists covering operations from hotels and reporting information from the formal briefings provided by the military. While there was no censorship in place, the inability of journalists to move freely about during the combat operation resulted in managed reporting (Sidle, 1991, pp. 62–73). Many military leaders painfully distrust the media and are cautious about what gets out to the press. One possible explanation for the army's distrust of the news media is that journalists do not always take the time for accurate reporting. In many cases, news media rush to deadline. Attribution, a fundamental part of news reporting, is often absent, and essential military termi-nology and critical facts are sometimes incorrect. In some cases, stories are com-pletely fabricated (Miracle, 2003, p. 45). The underlying problem is that the military and the media hate each other, because soldiers nor reporters understand the nature

of war. The soldiers understand fighting. The journalists understand communications. Neither group knows that the political impact of combat depends on the communication of the fighting (Noyes, 1992, p. 33).

Before the War in Iraq (2003), representatives of the largest mass media in the U.S. and the EU required from the U.S. military news management policy without rigid restrictions over press. Journalists were frustrated by the rules of engagement during the last Gulf war. They threatened to blockade coalition pool reporting and military news conferences. The U.S. Government also faced a problem of counteracting the propaganda coming from the Saddam Hussein regime and Iraqi government. Before the war, there were approximately 200 foreign reporters in Baghdad. They were working under severe restrictions and were able to report government stories only. Therefore the Pentagon developed a new public relations concept known as "Embedded Media Program". In comparison to the Gulf War of 1991, where the Pentagon controlled the news as tightly as possible, the war of 2003 was a wide-open affair for selected reporters.

2 PERSONAL EXPERIENCES FROM DIFFERENT WARS FROM 1991 TO 2003

Numerous national and international initiatives attempted to collect experiences and lessons learned from the past about relations between the press and the military. Some of the official military reports tended to be open, while others were restricted or classified. Most of the analyses were conducted by the military. Here, we want to present experiences and lessons learned from a war correspondent's point of view. As a war correspondent with fifteen years of experience from places such as the Balkans, Chechnya, Afghanistan and Iraq, I would like to briefly introduce some of my lessons learned. Before the War for Slovenia, I had been member of the Yugoslav People's Army for a year. Later, I was member of the Slovenian military forces (Slovenian Territorial Defence). I worked as correspondent from different wars from Croatia (1991) to Iraq (2003), mainly for American-Slovenian private television company POP TV, Associated Press Television News and other media.

2. 1 War for Slovenia (1991)

War for Slovenia was an armed conflict in the former Yugoslavia that arouse between the Slovenian security forces and the Yugoslav People's Army following Slovenia's declaration of independence on 25 June 1991. It lasted from 27 June 1991 until 7 July 1991, when the peace agreement was signed. As a soldier, I noticed that almost no restrictions applied for the media on the Slovenia's side, including the media who supported the action of the Yugoslav People's Army. Because the press in the former Yugoslavia was frequently infiltrated by the domestic intelligence and security agencies like the State Security Administration (SDB – Služba državne bezbednosti) and the military Counterintelligence Service (KOS - Kontraobaveštajna služba), this approach could have represented a security risk for Slovenians. The actions of

the Slovenian forces were successfully integrated with the military news management policy. An international media centre was established in the Slovenia's capital Ljubljana and Slovenian Prime Minister, and chiefs of the military and police forces provided the reporters with comprehensive briefings. Domestic and foreign media representatives were able to see action on the ground, in the field with the units, almost without any restrictions. The Slovenian government successfully presented the conflict to the foreign media and their public as the story of a small country fighting against one of the biggest armies in Europe to win democracy and independence from an authoritarian Yugoslav communist state,. They attracted considerable international media and public sympathy. The Yugoslav People's Army wanted to severely restrain the media's ability to report, but it was unable to control the media or the territory. At Ljubljana Airport, Yugoslav troops killed two Austrian journalists. However, the war was too short to analyse the impact on news management during combat activities.

2. 2   Balkan Wars (1991–2000)

The Croatian War for Independence (1991–1995) was fought between the forces of Croatia, which had declared independence from Yugoslavia, and the Yugoslav People's Army, and Serbian local and paramilitary units, some of them created by Serbian Secret Service (such as the Arkan's force). The Bosnian War (1992–1995) was an armed conflict between Serbs, Bosnians and Croats in Bosnia and Herzegovina, including forces from Serbia, Montenegro and Croatia. The war was characterized by brutality, ethnic cleansing, massacres of civilians, bitter fighting, indiscriminate shelling of cities and villages. The media described the War in Bosnia as the most devastating conflict in Europe since the end of the Second World War. The Kosovo War (1998–1999) included armed clashes between Serbian security forces and ethnic Albanian rebels (Kosovo Liberation Army), which broke out in February 1998. After a year of fighting and infliction of many civilian casualties, the peace talks did not bring any results. Even more, the conflict grew into a full-scale war in March 1999. The war ended with NATO intervention against Serbian forces. The Macedonian War (2001) was the insurgency in the north of the Republic of Macedonia which took place between February and August 2001. It was an armed conflict between ethnic Albanian rebels (former Kosovo Liberation Army members) and the security forces of the Republic of Macedonia.

During the Balkan Wars, the Yugoslav People's Army and Serbian security forces were using outdated military news management policy. It was based on the same theoretical dispositions, which had been established in the communist states. To understand it, we have to briefly describe the nature of the system in the former Yugoslavia. All media in former Yugoslavia were controlled by the state. Censorship was backed in cases where performances did not meet with the favour of the leadership. The ruling authorities viewed media as a propaganda tool, and widely practiced censorship to exercise almost full control over the information dissemination. To control the media, the ruling authorities were also using SDB and KOS, which controlled foreign reporters in the country. SDB was responsible for the terrorist attacks,

eliminations and kidnappings of dozens of enemies of the state, within Yugoslavia and internationally. It was responsible for providing press with the propaganda information against Western capitalist states, including conspiracy theories. Yugoslav media were deliberately provided with number of information which was only partly true. Those pieces of information where usually repeated and dispersed over a wide variety of media in order to create the chosen result in audience attitudes. This strategy was present in the media strategy of Yugoslav and Serbian government even after the fall of communism in 1991.

My experience with KOS officers as a soldier of the Yugoslav People's Army could demonstrate the aforementioned strategy. When I was a soldier in the Zeljava military airport near Bihač, KOS officers provided us with weekly briefings about the political situation in Yugoslavia. After ethnic conflicts between Croats and Serbs continued to increase, KOS officers forbade us to watch, listen or read any Slovenian or Croatian media news. In the beginning of the 1991 their weekly briefings included propaganda information against Western capitalist states and conspiracy theories (to discredit Slovenian and Croatian leadership). For example, they were talking about "top secret information which must not be told to anyone". They for example said that Slovenian president Milan Kučan had been born in Serbia, that he was Serbian by nationality and that he secretly worked for Belgrade. They also said that Slovenian Minister of Defense Janez Janša had taken large sums of money to Austria and had bought a house, where he would stay during possible conflict between Slovenian and Yugoslav troops; that the President of Yugoslavia, a Slovenian, Janez Drnovšek was gay; that Croatian president Franjo Tudjman had brought to Croatia 4,000 fascist soldiers from Germany and Australia to fight against Yugoslav soldiers, etc. Of course, they told us straight away that we "have nothing to fear because they are poorly armed and we are members one of the strongest armies in the world". When war in Slovenia started, KOS officers told us that they received fully confirmed information that all Slovenian leaders, including Kučan and Janša escaped to Klagenfurt, Austria and left Slovenian soldiers to fight Yugoslav troops alone. All this information was false.

During the Balkan Wars, Yugoslav and Serbian officials divided reporters into two groups, with two different news management systems:

a) Domestic reporters and foreign journalists from the countries who supported Yugoslav or Serbian government policy (unofficially they were using a term "friendly reporters").

"Friendly reporters" were mainly Serbian journalists; only few of them were foreign press representatives. Patriotic coverage by the main Serbian media resulted in the Serbian public's support of the war effort. In the beginning of the Croatian War, Yugoslav and Serbian security forces or Serbian paramilitary units provided "friendly reporters" with the status of embedded reporters. They were able to join the troops in the frontline and had full and free access to operational combat missions and limited access to mission preparation. Their news was monitored. If their reports

did not support the state policy, they lost confidence and special status. After the war, some Serbian editors and journalists confirmed that the government, military and secret service imposed a large number of orders, bans and instructions on how to report about the war. Especially KOS provided them with false "exclusive stories about crimes against Serbian civilians". The secret service was using the majority of "friendly reporters" for spreading false information and conspiracy theories. With the weakening of the SDB's position a year before the dissolution of Yugoslavia, the secret service of the Yugoslav People's Army (KOS) strengthened its position. KOS was spreading numerous conspiracy theories to the press (such as the information that the town of Dubrovnik was being defended by 30, 000 fascist soldiers and 7,000 Kurdish terrorists when, in reality, Croatian military forces in the area were at that time virtually non-existent; or the information that Vatican and Germany wanted to destroy Yugoslavia to impose a "Fourth Reich") and carried out terrorist attacks like "Operation Opera Orientalis". Operation involved diversions, the spreading of misinformation, and psychological warfare. This strategy resulted in the Serbian state-run press creating an atmosphere of fear and hatred among Yugoslavia's Serbs by spreading exaggerated and false messages of ethnically based attacks by Bosnian Muslims and Croats against Serbian population. According to Serbian police officers who fought in the Croatian and Bosnian War, a small number of "friendly reporters" received from SDB and KOS officers not only instructions on how to report, but they were also working for the secret service. I was later able to confirm these statements in the interviews with some of the retired secret agents. I was surprised when during the first phase of Croatian and Bosnian War, two journalists (who did not have access to the non-Serb military positions) asked me about Croatian or Muslim military strength, moral, armament, number of tanks or artillery pieces in specific positions. These questions could indicate they were working for the secret service.

After the first few months of war and a full access to the battlefield were over, "friendly reporters" were given limitations. During the battle of Vukovar (August – November 1991), when international public was shocked by the brutality, ethnic cleansing and indiscriminate shelling of the town, the Yugoslav People's Army commanders denied "friendly reporters" unlimited access to operational combat missions, although the commanders of some Serbian paramilitary units or Serbian forces in Bosnia did not respect this denial. After British reporters revealed the existence of concentration camps in Bosnia and Herzegovina (1992), Bosnian Serbs imposed severe restrictions on all foreign reporters. In the Kosovo War, these restrictions were fully respected. The most severe restrictions were imposed on press coverage.

b) All other media representatives.

Just a few of them with good local connections had an opportunity to get access to the local Serbian troops and the frontline, like "friendly reporters", without the obligation to report a pro-Serbian stance. Most of the foreign media representatives were presented to the military and the police force like potential spies and more likely enemies of the state, if they did not openly support Serbian political and military

actions. For them they imposed hard restrictions both on the news content and access to the frontline. It was impossible to get permission for access to the battlefield, frontline or approval to go on the territory which is under control of opposite forces. Most of Yugoslav People's Army commanders and later commanders of the Serbian troops were arrogant and sometimes brutal to the foreign reporters. Many reporters were robbed, harassed, imprisoned, beaten, tortured and killed. Approximately 75 journalists have died in the wars in the former Yugoslavia; most of them were killed by the Yugoslav People's Army or Serbian troops. They were not allowed to take any photos and videos of soldiers, weapons, military equipment or police troops even when far away from the frontline. As if there was no war in the country. Photos or filming of burned non-Serb villages or any traces of the crimes against civilian population were strictly prohibited. Yugoslav and Serbian forces were accusing foreign reporters of being hostile towards the Serbian nation, because they were also presenting opposing views from the Bosnian or Croatian sides. Serbian officials perceived reports about Serbian war crimes as hostile information presented by the Western press and accused reporters to be sympathetic towards the enemies or working as spies for foreign secret services. Because of the severe restrictions, Serbian troops believed that foreign reporters would rely on government briefings and the information reported by Serbian media. However, they were wrong. Reporters were able to reach the frontline from the non-Serbian side. The Yugoslav and Serbian news management strategies were a disaster and the consequences of this were devastating. The Serbs lost media war completely.

News management strategy of the Bosnian Muslims, Croats or ethnic Albanian rebels was much more different. All reporters (except reporters from the Serbian press and foreign journalists from the countries who supported Yugoslav or Serbian government policy) were very much welcome. This opened door to an extensive coverage of the conflicts. The quite free and unfettered access that the media were given by Croatian and Bosnian troops or ethnic Albanian rebels was unprecedented. In the begging of war in Croatia and Bosnia, reporters were given free and unlimited access to the battlefield and as a result the international public became a participant in almost every phase of war. Correspondents were free to move around the battlefield with no official guidelines. After a year of fighting, Croatians and Muslims also imposed restrictions on the press coverage, but they allowed access to the frontline. The access to the frontline was only forbidden when an offensive was launched. It was really easy to get interviews from the police or military commanders. Military of all ranks from privates to generals could be interviewed, without any supervision or censorship, if they agreed, right there in the battlefield. When the international public saw the war on the evening news, a shift occurred in the public opinion about Croatian, Bosnian or Kosovo War. During the conflict between Bosnian Croats and Muslims in 1993, Bosnian Croats prohibited photography of destroyed non-Croat villages or traces of the crimes against civilian population. In August 1995, during the Croatian military operation Storm (it was the last major battle of the Croatian War of Independence: strategic victory in the Croatian and Bosnian War), Croatian forces imposed the tightest restrictions on the media coverage.

Even big mistakes in the news media strategy in Croatia and Bosnia (1991–1995) did not persuade Serbian officials or commanders to apply changes. Because Belgrade did not officially declare war in Kosovo in 1998, the government allowed reporters to work in the region quite freely after they were given press accreditations. Some reporters, however, were not able to get accreditations. During combat operations, security troops blocked all journalist access to the region of fighting. Even "friendly reporters" (with some exceptions) did not have access to operational combat missions and the frontline and it was almost impossible to get any interview from the police or military commanders. Interviews with police officers or soldiers were prohibited. When in 1999 the conflict became a full-scale war with the NATO intervention, Serbian authorities issued a statement ordering an immediate expulsion of all reporters from NATO countries. The Serbian information minister said their reporting was supporting the "aggressive acts of NATO". Shortly afterwards, the Yugoslav information minister told foreign journalists in Belgrade that they were all welcome to stay. In practice, all journalists were expelled from Kosovo, except a few "friendly reporters" (from Serbia, Greece and Russia) who supported Slobodan Milosevic's policy. They were, however, working under severe restrictions and censorship, operating mainly from the Pristina hotel. A few reporters of Serbian state-run media were embedded in the Serbian Army. Military secret service personnel (former KOS officers) provided them with the materials and instructions where and how to report. The majority of foreign reporters were expelled not just from Kosovo, but from the entire Yugoslav territory. Only a few of the biggest mass media representatives (like CNN or BBC) were allowed to stay, but only in Belgrade, and they worked mainly from hotels.

A number of foreign reporters with experiences from the Croatian, Bosnian and Kosovo wars told me in Macedonia in 2001 that most of the Macedonian officials and commanders at that time were still using the same strategy towards foreign press like Yugoslav or Serbian troops years before. In the beginning of the conflict, reporters were quite sympathetic towards the Macedonians and were very disappointed with the Macedonian attitude towards foreign press. The state government and the security forces were using news management model that severely restrained journalists' work. They imposed tough restrictions on the access to the frontline. It was absolutely impossible to get permission for access to the battlefield or even approval to go on the territory which was under the control of the rebels. They hoped that the reporters would rely only on daily government briefings. However, that was not the case. Some reporters were able to cross no man's land and many of them were able to obtain information and pictures from the rebels or civilians. Most of the time, they ignored bureaucratic government briefings. The Macedonian news management strategy was a complete disaster, most of the foreign reporters perceived it as censorship. Not so much because the restrained media's ability to report from the frontline, but because of the government's efforts to disable reporters from obtaining information, video materials or photographs from the opposite (rebel) side. Moreover, a number of reporters who had covered other Balkan wars in the past were convinced that there was a small difference between an unfriendly, hostile attitude towards the

foreign press, commanders from Serbian security forces, Yugoslav People's Army and Macedonian security forces. A lot of Macedonian soldiers, police officers and commanders had arrogant communication with the foreign reporters. They accused them of being sympathetic towards the rebelss and that the information they provided did not match the information provided on daily government briefings. There were even bizarre scenes when for example Macedonian police or military command- ers shouted at reporters as if they were kids, teaching them how to do their job. This behaviour was identical to the behaviour of the Yugoslav People's Army com- manders in the beginning of the wars in Croatia or Bosnia. There were also other bizarre scenes, for example when they even strictly prohibited to film or photograph soldiers or military trucks in the street in the middle of city. To them, everything was a military secret. An interesting fact is that there were almost no military briefings, as if the Army did not have anything to do with the press. Most of the commanders and state officials (like most of the civilians) were trying to convince foreign reporters that the war in Macedonia was just a result of U.S. and EU conspiracy.

On the other hand, ethnic Albanian rebels welcomed the reporters. Commanders acted like public affairs officers, providing reporters with full support for commu- nication with the civilians and the troops. The reporters were able to work in the rebels' territory quite freely. It was not good for the rebels that they were not careful about hiding the information which could compromise units or command positions. Nevertheless, they imposed strict restrictions on filming of the rebels' faces, arms or combat positions. As opposed to the Macedonian security forces, they allowed reporters to move freely to the territory which was under Macedonian control. Even by doing so, they were not able to dominate the media coverage of the war and garner international public support. The NATO forces closed all routes from Kosovo to Macedonia so that it was very hard for the press to rich rebel territory.

2. 3 Second Chechen War (1999–2000)

The second war in Chechnya was launched by the Russian Federation against Chechen Republic of Ichkeria. It ended de facto independence of Chechnya and restored Russian control over the territory. The war has been known for bitter fighting, brutality, massacres and indiscriminate shelling of large towns. During the Chechen war in January 2000, I was able to reach the region of northeast Georgia. Chechen troops and refugees sought asylum in the Georgian Valley of Pankisi, which has a reputation of being a lawless area. Chechens would cross the border freely to flee from the Russian Army, regroup and re-arm. Foreign visitors were discouraged from entering the region by a series of high-profile kidnappings. Georgian police and army kept their distance as well, as rumours swirled that the area was a base of heavily armed heroin smugglers. Embedded with a Chechen military unit, I was able to cross dangerous, snowy mountains from the Pankisi Valley to the south of Chechnya. This was certainly my most dangerous and difficult mission so far. There was a danger of Russian air strikes, attacks of the Russian Special Forces, a danger of the Chechen radical militant groups, a danger of being killed or kidnapped. We were forced to cross over 2,000 and 3,000 meter high mountain passes. The highest

mountain of the Eastern Caucasus is Tebulosmta at an elevation of 4,493 meters above sea level. Unfortunately, there were no other option to enter Chechnya.

More or less, Russia was still working with the same news management policy which it used in the times of the communist Soviet Union. There have been a lot of similarities between the previously described media management system in the communist Yugoslavia. Russian media freedom remained extremely poor. Journalists continued to find it extremely difficult to cover the news freely, particularly with regard to government corruption, organized crime, police torture, human rights abuses and the situation in Chechnya. Russia remains one of the most dangerous countries in the world for the media due to the widespread lawlessness that allows politicians, secret service agents, and criminals to silence journalists. The Russian federal Ministry of internal affairs controlled media access to the area of the Chechen conflict. Russian journalists told me unofficially that Moscow was dividing media representatives into two groups: friendly reporters and all the others. "Friendly reporters" were more or less all state-run media journalists, who had been proving their reliability for years to the secret service, military and authorities. Some of them had access to operational combat mission. Their reports were under severe restrictions and censorship. Officers provided "friendly reporters" with the materials and instructions on how to report and organize interviews and visits to the troops, the frontline etc. Russian editors and journalists received from the politicians, military and secret service orders and instructions on how to report. If media reports did not support the state policy, reporters lost permission to work and in some cases reporters or editors who had covered the situation in Chechnya have been killed or severely beaten. The number of threats, violent assaults and murders of journalists have created a climate of fear. After the war was officially over, the government imposed strict bans on all video material that showed fighting between Russian troops and the rebels. At any stage of war, reporters did not have any access to mission preparation.

What kind of news management program did Russia use for other journalists who were not "friendly reporters"? None. They did not allow them to enter Chechnya. During the war, Russia imposed severe restrictions for traveling to Chechnya. Foreign journalists were required to have government accreditation to enter Chechnya, but even those with proper documents were sometimes refused access. Several Russian and foreign journalists were detained while on assignment in the North Caucasus region. Russia lost the media war for international public support, but they did not lose domestic public support. Russian press and Russian public supported government policy and the war.

In the beginning of the war, Chechen troops welcomed foreign reporters. If they caught a Russian journalist, however, they would kill him as a spy. Most of the Chechen commanders, soldiers and civilians were very friendly towards the foreign press, providing them with full support. We were able to work quite freely; however, there was still considerable danger of abductions. Information which could compromise units or command positions was strictly hidden. After the fall of Grozny

(February 2001), it was forbidden to film or photo the rebels' faces or combat positions. When Chechen troops lost war and went to insurgency, foreign reporters were not welcome anymore, because they were very afraid of Russian secret service infiltration.

Because of the media blockade, abuses of human rights on both sides did not reach the audience. It was simply too risky for reporters to go on the Chechen side, while kidnapping was commonplace in the lawless territories by the Islamic radicals. On the other side, Russia prevented media from entering Chechnya. So there were no witnesses and media reports about brutal war in which Russian soldiers as prisoners were brutally beheaded, innocent civilians were consistently killed, women raped and hospitals blown up. There were no witnesses of the torture of prisoners, which was also a common practice carried out by Russian security forces and Chechen rebels. The siege and fighting in Grozny left the capital devastated like no other European city since World War II.

2. 4   Afghanistan War (2001)

September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks led to the intervention in the Afghan Civil War by the United States and its allies. The main goal was to dismantle Al Qaeda, the terrorist organization led by Osama bin Laden and to remove from power the Taliban regime who supported Al Qaeda and hosted their leadership. Coalition forces were fighting in conjunction with the Northern Alliance. In the beginning, U.S. Army had no troops on the ground so they did not have the opportunity to control the media. But still, when U.S. conventional forces arrived to Afghanistan in 2002, lack of access became a frequent complaint. American journalists were permitted to embed with ground forces in limited numbers and for short periods of time.

With the permission of the Northern Alliance commanders, I arrived from Tajikistan to the town of Fayzabad in the east of Afghanistan as an Associated Press Television News associate. From there, we continued our way over the 4,430 meter high Anjuman Pass and Panjshir Valley to the direct vicinity of the capital Kabul. I stayed there from the beginning of air strikes against Taliban positions until the occupation of the capital. At that time, it was typical that there was no modern form of military force. Instead, combat power consisted of armed groups of tribal fighters. It is no surprise that there was no military news management. After having received media accreditation from the Area Command, the reporters had free access to Northern Alliance battle positions. We filmed and photographed without any limitations and we could easily make an interview with any soldier or commander. We easily accessed data such as the number of soldiers, reserve, weapons, unit tactics, methods of camouflage, location of headquarters or combat morale. We could be embedded with a unit and remain on the battlefield during engagements. Such unlimited access is on the one hand a journalist's dream, enabling the work without restrictions, but it is, on the other hand, hardly acceptable for a modern military force. Never in any war, where an organized modern armed force was engaged, did reporters have such unfettered access to the battlefield and movement within it, as it was the case

in Afghanistan in 2001. Access to the battlefield on the Taliban side, however, was impossible, because the Taliban offered considerable financial rewards to those who would seize or kill a foreign journalist.

2. 5   Iraq War (2003)

The Iraq War started on 20 March 2003 by an invasion force led by the United States against Saddam Hussein regime. It was followed by a longer phase of fighting, in which an insurgency emerged to oppose the occupying forces and the newly formed Iraqi government. As a journalist, I did not get permission to report from Baghdad, so reporting from the coalition side was the only option. And a better one too. As I experienced as a reporter visiting Baghdad 1998, Saddam Hussein's regime did not allow media access to the frontline, reporters were able to operate in Baghdad only, under severe restrictions and censorship. They operated mainly from the hotels. All our movements through the city were monitored by the Iraqi secret service officers which provided escort and all interviews or contacts with the Iraqi citizens were "on the record". Interviews with the military or police personnel were not allowed.

Colleagues who worked in Iraqi capital during the war in 2003 told me that only those reporters who agreed to full censorship were given accreditation and were allowed to stay in the country. Some of the media representatives lost accreditation because Iraqi government did not like their reports. The fear of expulsion further deterred hard-hitting reporting. Iraqi officials detained, threatened, or otherwise intimidated several reporters. Shortly after the war began, they detained four reporters on false suspicion of espionage. Such Iraqi news management policy turned mass media much more against Saddam Hussein regime.

The U.S. concept of "Embedded Media Program" was in 2003 really revolutionary for mass media and the military. The program and the rapid advances in technology permitted most media to file real-time reports from the battlefield first time in history. U.S. led coalition gave accreditations for covering the war: 692 journalists, photographers, and news crews (including 20 percent from non-U.S. media) who were embedded within U.S. and British military units and 1,670 reporters who were unilateral (because of the logistic problems, security and worries that the military could not guarantee safety and working environment for almost 3,000 reporters they divided journalists to those with "embedded" and "unilateral" status). When the war started, 408 journalists were embedded with ground units. "Embed" and "unilateral" journalists signed contracts with the military promising not to report information that could compromise unit position, future missions, classified weapons, and information they might find (see more: U.S. Department of Defense: Public Affairs guidance on Embedding Media during possible future operation/deployments in the U.S. Central Commands area of responsibility, Washington, Jan 2003). The programme defines "embedded media" as a media representative remaining with a military unit on an extended basis, perhaps a period of weeks or even months. Their decision was that media would be given access to operational combat missions, including mission preparation and debriefing, whenever possible. If needed, commanders would

provide the embedded media with billeting, rations and medical attention commensurate with that provided to members of the unit, as well as access to military transportation and assistance with communications filling/transmitting media products, if required. With this program, the Office of the Secretary of Defence had three objectives: dominate the media coverage of the war, counter third-party disinformation and assist in garnering U.S. public and international support. Embeds could stay with units as long as they wanted. Most of them voluntarily disembedded between 9 April and 1 May 2003 because major combat operations were declared over, freedom of movement throughout Iraq increased, and many large media organizations established bureaus in Baghdad (Wright and Harkey, 2004, pp. 4, 6).

Embedded journalists (and some unilateral ones) lived, ate, and travelled with the troops. Not only far away from the frontline, but also during combat operations in the battlefield, what was for the most reporters absolutely impossible in previous conflicts. They also came under enemy fire with the troops. Thanks to 24-hour news coverage, the public watched the steady advance to Baghdad and saw the toppling of the symbols of the Iraqi regime. The only limits were the function of operational security and communications transmission difficulties. From an analyst standpoint, the Pentagon's innovative decision in favour of the "Embedded Media Program" is a fascinating case of organizational change in an exceptionally large, hierarchical, and presumably change-averse bureaucracy operating in a fast-paced and instable environment (Rid, p. 3). Critics of U.S. intervention in Iraq criticized embedded journalism. The practice has been criticized as being part of a propaganda campaign and an effort to keep reporters away from civilian populations and sympathetic to invading forces. But many of relevant studies shows (see: Cardiff School of Journalism: The role of embedded reporting during the 2003 Iraq war. Cardiff University, London, 2003. UN Institute for Media, Peace and Security: Lessons to be learned from 2003 Iraq war. Oxford, 2003.) that critics were unable to find evidence that substantiated the argument, that embedding turns reporters into public relations officers for the military – indeed, they were able to find examples in which embedding enabled journalists to subject military claims to critical scrutiny in a way that they wouldn't have been able to do if they were dependent on the U.S. military's briefing operation at Central Command in Qatar (Lewis, 2006, p. 3). In previous wars, reporters never had access to operational combat missions and mission preparation in such a large scale.

The "Embedded Media Program" was successful from the perspective of the military and the media. In is true that the US Army and especially the commanders on the field got more responsibilities, but also excellent opportunity to show their part of the story from the battlefield. In combat the commander is responsible for everything that belongs within his circle of influence. Since embedded reporters were attached to units, these reporters now become a commander's responsibility. The "Embedded Media Program" provided the media unprecedented access to military units and members of those units and allowed the American and international public to witness soldiers during combat operations. The military-media relationship was strengthened, the cultural gap was reduced, and many of the lingering suspicions

that each institution had of the other were greatly reduced. Because the interaction between the many individuals involved in the program was so close, relationships were formed that will assist both institutions in the coming years—when young commanders become senior commanders and reporters become producers, editors, and bureau chiefs (Wright and Harkey, 2004, p. 6). In public media, some authors mistakenly presented embedded journalism as a new concept because the term "embedded" first came into use in the media coverage of the 2003 invasion of Iraq. We have to know that embedding media with the military is not a new thing, but the magnitude of the effort and the number of media embedded was unprecedented.

Was the "Embedded Media Program" perfect? No, it was not. It was certainly a lot better than it was in the previous wars when war correspondents basically had no access to the frontline during combat activities (except in a short Slovenian war and in the first months of fighting in Balkan Wars and Afghanistan) or had no access to the country in war. But the main problem for the embedded reporters was the fact that they were assigned to a specific unit and had to stay with that unit unless permitted to leave. They were unable to rush off to another area where there might have been more action. If your unit was far away from action for a longer period of time, then you did not get any useful story for a long time. That also meant that you could not get where you wanted, which was crucial for media in democracy. The programme was certainly not perfect for 1,670 unilateral or non–embedded reporters. Only a small number of them were able to enter Iraq. That is the main reason why stories reported by many unilateral journalists in Kuwait tended to be more negative for U.S. led coalition troops. The Pentagon frowned on the presence of unilateral reporters in Iraq. Officials repeatedly warned that the military could not guarantee their safety and urged them to avoid the country. Once the war began, Kuwaiti authorities systematically prevented non-embedded reporters from entering southern Iraq. Those wishing to travel to the border were required to obtain official approval from the Kuwaiti government. In practice, only few received it. If the reporters managed to cross the border, they could work quite freely. U.S. and British military authorities often would not speak to them or allow them into military bases. Those unilateral journalists entering Iraq illegally do so at higher risk, with no expectation of any assistance from a coalition army. The unilateral crews were often thrown out of the war zone to Kuwait by coalition units because they did not have an embedded status. Embedded reporters were also much safer. As Bryan Whitman, Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Public Affairs (U.S. Department of Defense) said: "The independent, or unilateral, journalists out on the battlefield had everything wrong that could go wrong happen to them. They got killed; they got injured; they got captured; they got lost. Every bad scenario that you could think of happened to them. And that is not to say that it wasn't dangerous for embedded journalists either" (Sylvester and Huffman, 2005, p. 45). Indeed, nearly all of the 14 journalists killed during the initial stage of the war were unilaterals.

The "Embedded Media Program" allows new found freedoms to the media representatives on the battlefield but, it does not mean unrestricted access and reporting of

military operations. We all got clear guidelines established to ensure the safety and operational security of the media and military personnel. Violations of these rules could result in the termination of that media's permission to report from coalition forces side.

Conclusion

Military news management which wants to severely restrain the media's ability to report from the battlefield could represent a threat to freedom of speech and to the foundation of democracy. The military control over the press could encroach on basic freedoms. For professional journalism in democracy, it is unacceptable to become a propaganda tool. On the other hand, however, we have to understand military resistance and desire for operational secrecy. There is no commander who would want to be held responsible for the failure of a military operation or even for the death of his soldiers because of free media access to the battlefield. Citizens of a democracy have the right to know about and judge what operations are being planned and conducted in their name. The military has an operational requirement for information to be made available only on a need-to-know basis. We are talking about the balance between citizens' "right to know" or the media's expectations/demands that the military grant them access to the battlefield, and military resistance and desire for operational secrecy. As we have seen from the history: the balance is a delicate matter. From army's perspective, it is essential to develop a quality strategic military news management. According to my experiences, the most improved and developed public relations concept seems to be the "Embedded Media Program", although the program was not very attractive for the media. An attractive program for us, reporters, would be a full and unlimited access to the battlefield like we have seen in a short Slovenian war and first months of fighting in Balkan Wars and Afghanistan. But for the military, this could represent a serious security risk. The "Embedded Media Program" appears to be the best solution to date at balancing the needs of the press and the military, although some improvements remain to be made: to allow more reporters to be "embedded" from different countries and to develop strategies which allow reporters to be able to rush off to another area where there may be more action.

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