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Media Under Fire: Reporting Conflict in Iraq

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I N F O R M A T I O N A N D R E S E A R C H S E R V I C E S

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No. 21 2002–03

Media Under Fire: Reporting Conflict in Iraq

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Executive Summary

News that the United States military has 'embedded' 500 journalists in its fighting units to cover the conflict in Iraq suggests that the public will receive a fuller picture of this conflict than it received of both Operation Desert Shield and Operation Desert Storm (the 'Gulf War') of 1990–91.

In that conflict, journalists were confined to 'pools' over which Allied forces exercised complete control. 'Pool' journalists were scattered among the Allied military units and fed their stories and pictures back to a rear headquarters where they were shared among the world's journalists. Reporters who broke the rules were threatened with losing their accreditation, being held in military barracks and being deported. The result was limited coverage that was heavily censored.

A major concern with such coverage is that it contravenes a basic tenet of democracy: that the press must be free to provide information so that people know, understand, and can make informed judgments of the actions undertaken by the government on their behalf. In times of conflict, a free media ensures that the public are not dependent on the military or political view of the campaign, but receive an independent description of events in order to make an informed choice as to whether or not to support the conflict.

The problem is that the media's claim to right of access to information on the basis of the public's right to know conflicts with the military's desire to win a war and to do so with minimum casualties. 'Bad' press, especially of bloody engagements and body bags, may cost the military valuable public support. A common explanation in the United States military for its disastrous loss in Vietnam in 1975 is that the war was lost at home before it was lost in the field.

The consequences of losing public support for any war can be severe and long-term for both a government and the military. Thus, in wartime, a new battle emerges on the home front—that for public opinion. Information is an essential weapon in this battle and whoever can control what 'facts' the public receives has a distinct advantage. It is here that the clash between the military and the media becomes apparent: it is, essentially, a battle between the right to win—and win with the support of the people 'back home'—and the right to know.

A key element of the conflict between the media and the military is that their underlying 'reasons for being' as well as their motivations and aims are quite different. While the

military and the media both consider themselves professions, they have very distinct—and some might argue opposing—characters and professional attributes, not least of which is that the military values patriotism and loyalty, while the media's loyalties can be variable, depending on the ownership of—and the nationalities that make up—the news organisation.

Since the Vietnam War, various militaries have experimented with controls over the media in times of conflict in order to win the battle for the hearts and minds of the public. These were perfected by the 1990–91 Gulf conflict and critics argue that little has changed in the subsequent conflicts in Kosovo and Afghanistan.

In 2003, the United States military has decided on a more open approach to media reporting of the conflict, partly in an attempt to 'counteract the potential for Iraqi disinformation that could be distributed by Arab news outlets'. Some have argued that 'embedding', combined with smaller, better digital cameras hooked to portable satellite dishes, may result in viewers and readers receiving 'some of the most graphic and revealing war footage and reporting ever'.

However, 'embedding' can have a significant effect on journalists, resulting in feelings of camaraderie that may affect a journalist's ability to be independent and objective. The potential for the public to be subjected to an 'information war' to win over their opinion suggests that it would be prudent to maintain a level of scepticism about the aim of the 'embedding' of journalists with military units.

News organisations have acknowledged that 'embedding' may 'raise questions' about journalistic independence, but they argue that these frontline reports will form only part of much broader coverage that will incorporate expert analysis and reports from non-'embedded' journalists. It appears there will be few restrictions imposed on these reporters. While this suggests that non-embedded journalists will remain free to go where they want and report what they want, there are concerns that American officials have given 'no convincing guarantees' that non-embedded journalists will be allowed to report without interference.

A difficulty for both 'embedded' and non-'embedded' journalists is that there are no guarantees of safety. At least four journalists, including an Australian cameraman, have been killed in the opening days of the war.

Outside Iraq, the number of journalists in the region is high, with one report claiming that there are 7000 journalists and crews scattered throughout the Middle East in Kuwait, Jordan, Turkey and Israel. It is hard to know how much of what happens inside Iraq these journalists will be able to report, given that their knowledge will not be obtained 'first-hand', but will have to be gleaned from a variety of sources who may have their own information—or misinformation—agendas.

What does all of this mean for the Australian public? Can Australians expect to be more fully informed of the 'truth' in the conflict in Iraq? Will 'embedded' journalists ensure a more complete picture that allows the public 'back home' to 'know what their sons and daughters are doing on behalf of the nation'?

The Australia military has taken a different approach to the United States military in handling the media, partly because many of Australia's troops are top secret ground forces, such as the Special Air Service personnel. Whereas the American military is 'embedding' journalists and is talking of supplying the maximum amount of information possible, the Australian Defence Force has rejected 'embedding' on the grounds that it is 'impractical'. Those journalists reporting on Australia's contribution to the conflict will have to follow some 'ground rules', although it appears that these have not been made public.

Overall, however, the restrictions may mean that Australians receive an overwhelming amount of information from American sources about the war in Iraq, but little information about Australia's contribution to the conflict.

Meanwhile, the modern technologies available to today's reporters raise another issue that, thus far, has received little attention: that the technology that gives journalists mobility and allows them to record every aspect of a conflict opens the possibility of their being called as witnesses in any subsequent war crimes trials.

Introduction

This Current Issues Brief canvasses some of the issues involved in today's media coverage of conflict. It discusses the role of a free media in a democracy before examining the division that this role creates between a media intent on the public's right to know and a military intent on winning any conflict in which it is involved. The paper then discusses whether 'embedding' can be seen as an attempt by the military to bring the media on side in its battle for public support for its endeavours. In the final sections, the paper notes the various impacts that new technologies have, both on coverage of a conflict and public access to alternative points of view, and comments on an emerging problem for the modern war correspondent that 'embedding' may exacerbate: being called to give evidence to a war crimes tribunal.

Conflict in Iraq 2003: Likely Media Coverage

The United States military has taken 500 journalists with its military units to the conflict in Iraq, embedding the journalists with its troops going to the front line. Of these 500, 100 are non-American and include at least three Australian journalists (two from the Australian Broadcasting Corporation and one from *The Age*) as well as Arabic satellite station Al Jazeera, which the Bush Administration has in the past called 'anti-American'.¹

What is 'embedding'?

'Embedding' does not mean unrestricted access and reporting. Although the controls are apparently not as stringent as those applied in the earlier Gulf War (see below), there are rules—violation of which 'could result in termination of that media's embed opportunity'.² The Pentagon's guidelines for 'embedded' journalists include:

- no information on ongoing engagements will be released unless authorised by an on-scene commander, and information about previous engagements and results will be released only if described in general terms
- reports giving specific information on 'friendly force' troop movements and deployment are prohibited
- information regarding future operations is strictly prohibited and no information identifying postponed or cancelled operations will be allowed

- journalists 'inadvertently exposed' to 'sensitive' information will be briefed on what to avoid covering in their reports; journalists allowed to see sensitive information that would normally be restricted will be denied access to that information unless they agree to a security review of their coverage
- journalists (including photographers and camera crew) are assigned to a specific unit and must stay with that unit unless permitted to leave (that is, they cannot rush off to another area where there may be more 'action')
- no private transport
- no personal firearms
- all interviews with service personnel are to be 'on the record'
- there are no specific prohibitions on media communications equipment; however, journalists must seek approval to use electronic devices in a combat/hostile environment and unit commanders may impose temporary restrictions on electronic transmissions.³

Limitations to media freedom

What does this mean for the reading and viewing public back home, whether in the United States or Australia? Ostensibly, the public will receive a more complete picture than that offered in Operations Desert Shield and Desert Storm in 1990–91. One report argues that the 'embedding', combined with smaller, better digital cameras hooked to portable satellite dishes, may result in viewers and readers receiving 'some of the most graphic and revealing war footage and reporting ever'.⁴

However, the restrictions may limit coverage more than is perceived. Some American journalists claim that the rules could allow the US military to 'enforce draconian restrictions on coverage of any operations in the region'.⁵ For example, on-scene commanders have the right to restrict information on ongoing engagements; as it is not clear what constitutes an 'ongoing engagement', some journalists fear that 'unit commanders could interpret it in an extremely broad manner as a basis to restrict reporting'.⁶ The same concern applies with regard to what constitutes 'sensitive' information. 'On the record' interviews may prevent service personnel from 'telling the truth' for fear of disciplinary action for saying too much.⁷

In addition, as was discovered in the Falklands War, 'embedding' can have a significant effect on journalists, resulting in feelings of camaraderie that may affect a journalist's ability to be independent and objective. (This will be discussed further below.)

That said, it is possible that overall coverage will be considerably different from that of the previous Gulf conflict in that it appears there will be few restrictions imposed on those

reporters not 'embedded' with American troops. This suggests that non-embedded journalists will remain free to go where they want and report what they want. Again, however, some journalists are concerned that American officials have given 'no convincing guarantees' that non-embedded journalists will be allowed to report without interference.⁸

A more significant problem for those journalists working independently of the military is that there are no guarantees for their safety: Allied commanders have talked about unleashing 3000 bombs and missiles on Iraq in the first 48 hours of the campaign. While it initially appeared that a more 'balanced' view of events than in the last Gulf conflict could come from the increased number of media correspondents based in Iraq, many of these journalists have since left the country for fear of being killed in the threatened bombing. (While it cannot be assumed that information from the Iraqi side would be any less biased than that obtained from the United States-led forces going into Iraq, the argument here is that it at least allows for an alternative range of information. For example, Peter Arnett's reports from Baghdad in 1991 were condemned as Iraqi propaganda, but they offered viewers an opposing view to that supplied by the Allies.)

The Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade has urged Australian media in Iraq to leave; the Australian Broadcasting Corporation and the Nine Network have both withdrawn their reporters from Baghdad.⁹ Nine Network correspondent Hugh Riminton gave his last report from the city on 18 March, noting: 'Much of the world's media is packing up or has already left, scared off by increasingly shrill warnings from the United States and the increasing restrictions being applied by the Iraqis'.¹⁰ However, he highlighted that many reporters were reluctant to leave because 'they feel it's vital to tell the story from the Iraqi side'.¹¹

American news executives are reported to be 'anguishing' over whether to order their staff to flee Baghdad or to remain in the city. *New York Times* journalist Jim Rutenberg reported that the decision involved 'weighty moral and ethical questions' for executives, who want the widest possible coverage from Baghdad but who do not want to endanger their reporters.¹²

A difficulty for reporters who want to remain in Iraq is that some of their number fear that the United States will deliberately target the positions from which they are filing their reports or will jam their transmissions. BBC correspondent Kate Adie, who covered the previous conflict in the Gulf, claims that the Pentagon is 'entirely hostile to the free spread of information' and has gone so far as to threaten to 'bomb areas in which war correspondents are attempting to report from the Iraqi side'.¹³ Adie also alleges that the Americans are vetting the journalists accompanying the military units, rejecting any who are sceptical of the need for the conflict, and claims that they are intending to take control of the American journalists' satellite equipment.¹⁴

Outside Iraq, the number of journalists in the region is high, with one report claiming that there are 7000 journalists and crews scattered throughout the Middle East in Kuwait,

Jordan, Turkey and Israel.¹⁵ It is hard to know how much of what happens inside Iraq these journalists will be able to report, given that their knowledge will not be obtained 'first-hand', but will have to be gleaned from a variety of sources who may have their own information—or misinformation—agendas.

Reports on Australia's contribution

It is not known what reports Australians will receive of their country's troops. While several Australian newspaper groups and television networks have sent correspondents to the Gulf, one difficulty they have faced in covering Australia's contribution to the conflict so far is that 'many of the troops are top secret ground forces, such as Special Air Service soldiers and commandos, who cannot be reported on'.¹⁶

Australian Defence Force spokesman Brigadier Mike Hannan has been quoted as saying that journalists reporting on Australian troops will have to abide by 'some ground rules'; these do not appear to have been placed on the public record. However, Hannan has said that journalists will not be censored, partly because: 'We learned a long time ago that you might as well be up-front because the chances of getting away with anything dodgy are nil these days'.¹⁷

The issue of information about Australian troops is particularly important given the outcry over coverage of Australia's contribution to the war in Afghanistan in 2001, when Australians found out what the SAS troopers were doing from Pentagon briefings.¹⁸ An editorial in *The Australian* noted that 'the US public had freer information about Australia's deployment than our own [the Australian public], a situation that was disgraceful and must not be allowed to recur'.¹⁹

There is potential for this to happen again. The Australia military has taken a different approach to the United States military in handling the media, partly for the reasons noted above to do with the nature of some its forces in the region.²⁰ Whereas the American military is 'embedding' 500 journalists and is talking of supplying the maximum amount of information possible, the Australian Defence Force has rejected 'embedding' on the grounds that it is 'impractical' because service personnel are in 'specialised units spread over a number of countries'.²¹ In addition, many of the countries hosting Australian forces are sensitive about the media.²²

At a media briefing on 20 March 2003, Hannan reiterated that the Australian Defence Force would not give the location of its troops in the war, and would not comment on 'current or future operations'.²³ When pushed as to when information about Australian forces' actions would be released, Hannan said details would be given 'when reporting on it will have no effect on current or future operations'.

Another major difference in approach is the policy towards identification of service personnel. The United States Defense Department guidelines say that the names and home towns of interviewed personnel can be reported, 'with the individuals' consent'.²⁴ The

Australian Defence Force restricts the identification of personnel to their rank and first name. The results so far are somewhat odd: an Australian Broadcasting Corporation *World Today* report on 19 March interviewed the one Australian working in the central 'war room', the Joint Operations Centre in Qatar, and noted that 'because of Defence Force reporting restrictions', they could identify the 29-year veteran of the Australian Army only as 'Major Tony'.²⁵ It remains to be seen whether the Australian public will take seriously—or find credible—military personnel identified in this way.

Overall, the restrictions may mean that Australians receive an overwhelming amount of information from American sources about the war in Iraq, but little information about Australia's contribution to the conflict.

Democratic principles: a free media

Why is a free media important to Australia now that it has joined the war in Iraq in 2003?

According to the basic tenets of democracy, a free press provides information to the public so that people know, understand, and can judge the actions undertaken by the government on their behalf, and can therefore make informed choices based on the facts. In this way, the media play a vital role in helping people to decide whether or not they approve of what their government is doing in their name.

This principle is reflected in the right to freedom of expression enshrined in Article 19 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), an international human rights treaty binding on both the United States and Australia. The right to seek, receive and impart information and ideas is an element of the right to freedom of expression that goes beyond the private right to hold opinions and is aimed at the safeguarding of the public right to information. The media have a special mandate under Article 19. As such, the obligation to ensure public access to information, which is primarily an obligation of the state, is also shared with media corporations who play a central role in guaranteeing the public right to know.²⁶

In theory, the media recognise their responsibility of providing information to the public, and strive for objectivity ('exhibiting actual facts uncoloured by the exhibitor's feelings or opinions'²⁷). In times of conflict, this means ensuring that the public are not dependent on the military or political view of the campaign, but receive an independent description of events in order to make an informed choice as to whether or not to support the conflict.

Such independent descriptions have become more important given the changing nature of war. In the nuclear era, the threat of mutually assured destruction decreased the likelihood of a total war, or a war of survival. Since the end of World War II, and especially since the end of the Cold War, Western democracies have been involved in a series of 'limited' wars that have not threatened their immediate survival or sovereignty. It has been argued that, as a result, the social contract between the citizen and the government—whereby the citizen has an obligation to support the government during wartime—has changed.²⁸ With

limited wars, citizens have the relative luxury of judging whether to support each war or peacekeeping operation on the 'merits of the situation' without concern for personal or national survival (although political appeals for support for such conflicts can be couched in these terms). A free media supplies the information that allows such judgments to be made.

Of course, it cannot be assumed that a free media means a fully informed public for two reasons: the media may not pass on all information to the public and, depending on the circumstances, the public may prefer not to be fully informed.

That is, the space and time limits within which the media operate mean they cannot publish or broadcast all information they receive—there is simply too much to be accommodated within the pages of a newspaper or in the viewing hours in a day. As a result, journalists and news managers must choose what information they will publish and transmit. This makes them gatekeepers who have the power to decide what information the public receive. While the media demand that their access to information be guaranteed, they reserve the right to decide what and how much of that information is passed to the public.

The media and the public may differ on this—it may be that, in certain circumstances, the public considers their interests are best served by a degree of secrecy undertaken on their behalf. For example, in times of conflict, the public may be more prepared to accept limits to their 'right to know' in order to prevent perceived risks to their 'sons and daughters' serving in the military.

This argument has been made in relation to the Gulf conflict of 1990–91, when surveys found that many Americans favoured restrictions imposed on the media and were content to hear the news of the war from military briefers.²⁹ Far from being dissatisfied with the restrictions on the media, one survey showed that 80 per cent of respondents supported restrictions on the media and 57 per cent were in favour of harsher controls being imposed.³⁰ Opinion polls showed that the public wanted war news, but they also wanted the war to be won quickly and cleanly and were willing to trade off the former for the latter.

Battling for hearts and minds: the media versus the military

The consequences of losing public support for any war can be severe and long-term for both a government and the military. A government may be ousted from office at the next election; the military may face the humiliation of a retreat and/or a loss. Thus, in the absence of an obligation to support the government's choice for war, a new battle emerges—that for public opinion. Information is an essential weapon in this battle and whoever can control what 'facts' the public receives has a distinct advantage. It is here that the clash between the military and the media becomes apparent: it is, essentially, a battle between the right to win—and win with the support of the people 'back home'—and the right to know.

Democratic societies require both a capable military and a free press. The first physically protects, under government direction, the sovereignty of the state and its democratic values and national interests, and thereby, the safety and democratic freedoms of its citizens. The second performs a similar, if more disputed function, independent of the government, in countering threats (including threats from the government itself) to the democratic fabric of the society and to the freedom of its citizens. These roles, and the different agendas and characters of each group, often place the military and the media in opposition, especially in time of war.

The conflict rests on arguments about the citizens' 'right to know'; that is, the requirement that citizens in a democracy should be kept informed of what their government is undertaking in their name, even if the majority supports constraints imposed on the media. This notion is often linked to the claim that a country's taxpayers have a right to be fully informed about what their taxes are being used for.³¹ The media argue that for information to have more value than propaganda, citizens should be informed through sources independent of the government. The military argue that the public's right to know cannot be placed above, or allowed to threaten, their right to win with minimum casualties. While the public's right to know can be limited on national security grounds, the limitation must be strictly confined to that which is absolutely necessary. If the restrictions are more than is required for that purpose, the media and the public have a legitimate complaint that their right to know, and therefore their right to freedom of expression, is being breached.³²

Opposing professions

A key element of the conflict between the media and the military is that their underlying 'reasons for being' as well as their motivations and aims are quite different. While the military and the media both consider themselves professions, they have very distinct—and some might argue opposing—characters and professional attributes:

- the military 'are trained to be very careful in their treatment of information and, as a regular practice, to withhold material from those not authorised to receive it'.³³ The media claims that all citizens in a democracy have a 'right to know' what is undertaken in their name
- for the military, 'secrecy and surprise' can be vital for successful operations, whereas the role of the media is to gather information for the widest possible dissemination³⁴
- the military would prefer to publicise only its successes, whereas the media make public the successes and failures of both sides
- the media will gather and disseminate a range of interpretations of events. The military gathers information for a focused purpose
- the military values patriotism and loyalty, while the media's loyalties can be variable, depending on the ownership of—and the nationalities that make up—the news organisation.

- the military 'demands team play', 'is hierarchical' and 'values loyalty and confidence in superiors' whereas journalists in Western democracies compete with one another, 'have no rank', and value 'objectivity and scepticism'³⁵
- the military 'depends on chains of command and people carrying out instructions precisely; journalism relies on lateral thinkers'.³⁶

An American survey demonstrated the conflict between the military professionalism (focused on victory) and media ethics (focused on 'truth') when it found that 60 per cent of military officers, compared to less than 10 per cent of news organisations, were in favour of disinformation tactics even if their own citizens also were deceived.³⁷

Handling the media: lessons from the past

The result of this conflict between the military and the media can be seen in the controls that have been exercised over the media in several wars since Vietnam. In fact, the development of the restrictions imposed on the media in the 1990–91 Gulf conflict can be traced to the alleged impact of the media on the outcome of the Vietnam War, which ended in 1975.

According to this explanation, the United States military felt that negative stories from the field as well as those highlighting the increasing death toll and cost of the war had caused public support for operations in Vietnam to decline, resulting in public demonstrations and calls for the United States to leave Vietnam. In other words, the war had been lost at home before it was lost on the front line. (Of course, there are many competing explanations for the outcome of the Vietnam War; these are outside the scope of this paper.)

The Falklands War between the United Kingdom and Argentina in 1982 offered the US military an example of how a controlled media could become part of a successful war effort. The British military had an immediate advantage in that the media could not get to the site of the war in the remote islands in the South Atlantic Ocean without military transport. Travelling with the Royal Navy, the journalists were completely reliant on the military, not only for access to the battle zone but for food, shelter, protection, and transmission of their reports, a task the Navy placed well down its list of priorities.³⁸

This total dependence on the military was important in three respects that are relevant to 'embedding' in 2003:

- it created an esprit de corps between the journalists and the military. As academics David Morrison and Howard Tumber later observed: 'It was not just a question of sharing the moods of the troops through shared experience, but of actively beginning to identify with them by being part of the whole exercise'. The journalists on board found there was 'simply no escaping the military's embrace'³⁹

- it allowed the military complete dominance of the media coverage. With stories sent through the ships' communications channels, military "minders" had direct access to copy and could decide how urgently stories would be transmitted, if at all, and in what order⁴⁰
- it led to an emphasis on the minutiae of the conflict at the expense of the big picture. That is, the focus on stories at the troop level—individuals under stress, acts of heroism, cameos highlighting single actions—tended to obscure what was happening elsewhere.

The Falklands War gave the US military a practical example of successful control of the media, and a link began to be drawn between military success and media control. The US military used the lessons to develop its own controls over the media and applied its new restrictions when invading Grenada (1983) and Panama (1989). Journalists were excluded from the immediate actions in both countries, gaining belated access under rigid controls. To this day, many details of these conflicts are not publicly known.

By August 1990, when Iraq invaded Kuwait, the US military had tested and perfected a completely new policy for dealing with the media so that when President George Bush Sr said the Gulf conflict 'would "not be a new Vietnam" and that this time U.S. forces would not have to fight with one arm tied behind their backs', it was clear what this meant—a 'free' media would not be allowed to ruin the campaign.⁴¹ As noted earlier, journalists were confined to pools, they were barred from battles without a military escort and their reports and photographs were cleared by Allied military censors.

The result, as one journalist covering the conflict observed, was that: 'Not a single eyewitness account, photograph or strip of video of combat between 400 000 soldiers in the desert was produced by this battalion of professional observers'.⁴² The grisly pictures late in the conflict of the Basra Road 'turkey shoot', when Allied war planes targeted fleeing Iraqi soldiers, were the work of independent journalists in an area free of military handlers.⁴³

Only after the war did it emerge that many of the stories relayed to the public were not true. An oft-cited example is that of the 'neo-natal incubators'. This story—in which Iraqi soldiers invading Kuwait were reported as throwing Kuwaiti babies out of their hospital incubators 'to die on the cold floor'—was later revealed to be a deliberate figment of the imagination of a public relations firm employed to generate sympathy for the planned war. Other stories grossly exaggerated the success of the Allied military's sophisticated high-technology weaponry; for example, the 'Patriot' missiles were much less successful in intercepting Iraq's 'Scud' missiles than was claimed at the time.⁴⁴

Although there were many complaints about the results of such media controls, especially in light of the untruths revealed after the war, little changed in the 1990s. Journalist Phillip Knightley, who has written a history of war correspondents (*The First Casualty*), argues that the results for reporting of conflicts were significant:

The lies, manipulation, propaganda, spin, distortion, omission, slant and gullibility of the coverage of Kosovo and Chechnya, so soon after the media debacle in the Gulf, has brought war correspondents to a crisis point in their history.⁴⁵

Journalists continued to complain at the lack of information in the 'war on terrorism' and the limited access to the action in Afghanistan in 2001.⁴⁶ No provision was made for journalists to accompany the American and Northern Alliance military forces in Afghanistan. United States Defence Secretary Donald Rumsfeld has said that Afghanistan was 'too volatile to try and accommodate media' but reporters were not stopped from 'going into Afghanistan on their own and reporting from anywhere they want'.⁴⁷

However, journalist Joel Campagna notes that journalists faced 'an array of restrictions' from both sides that hampered their ability to report.⁴⁸ While the Taliban barred most foreign media from areas under its control, the United States military 'provided very limited access to journalists covering the military campaign and on occasion curtailed journalists' movements and censored or intimidated those who tried to report developments on the ground'.⁴⁹

Embedded or embroiled, enmeshed and entombed?

What does this mean for the current conflict in Iraq? Arguably, the battle for the hearts and minds of the public is even more important in this conflict because the 'war' does not have the wide support of the actions taken in the Gulf in 1990–91. Just as there are verbal battles between countries at the United Nations over the necessity for action against Iraq, there are similar battles within countries between those in favour of ousting Iraqi leader Saddam Hussein—with or without United Nations backing—and those who are against such action and who want their nation to follow the dictates of the international body.

Where no decision has been made, and public support is wavering, there is a potential for information in the media to sway public opinion. The United States has acknowledged this, but only from the perspective of misinformation coming from 'the other side'. It says that it is allowing broader media coverage of this conflict in order to demonstrate its 'commitment to supporting our democratic ideals'.⁵⁰ That is, 'We need to tell the factual story—good or bad—before others seed the media with disinformation and distortion ... Our people in the field need to tell our story'.⁵¹

Journalist Robert Fisk takes a more cynical view, arguing that the United States is providing access because it fears that Saddam Hussein will commit an atrocity and blame it on the Americans. He claims that 'embedded' journalists can be 'rushed to the scene to prove that the killings were the dastardly work of the Beast of Baghdad rather than the "collateral damage" ... of fine young men who are trying to destroy the triple pillar of the "axis of evil"'.⁵² Fisk is not alone in holding this view: journalist Hampton Sides, writing in the *New Yorker*, cites an unnamed military officer saying reporters were needed to document the weapons in Saddam Hussein's arsenal because 'the world's not going to believe the U.S. Army. But they'll believe you [the media]'.⁵³

This can be seen as a response to what Rumsfeld alleged occurred in Afghanistan, when he complained that those journalists who were in Afghanistan were often 'hoodwinked by Taliban and al-Qaeda propaganda'.⁵⁴ He claimed that the Taliban 'would lie and drag people out of a hospital over to a neighbouring building and claim we hit the hospital or killed innocent civilians, when we didn't, and the press would carry it as though it were true'.⁵⁵

There appears to be little recognition here that the use of the media to supply 'propaganda' for broad dissemination—targeting especially the public on 'the other side'—applies equally to both camps. It is noteworthy that in the Gulf conflict of 1990–91, the Allied forces used the media to send messages to Saddam Hussein and can be argued to, at times, have negotiated with him through it. An attempt at a similar exercise may underlie the Bush Administration's complaint in February 2003 that it was not allowed airtime to rebut claims the Iraqi leader made in an interview with an American television network. (See below.)

The potential for the public to be subjected to an 'information war' to win over their opinion suggests that it would be prudent to maintain a level of scepticism about the aim of the 'embedding' of journalists with military units. Commenting on the plans to 'embed' journalists, CBS News anchor Dan Rather observed, 'There's a pretty fine line between being embedded and being entombed'.⁵⁶ A correspondent to the *New York Times* neatly summarised the potential problems of 'embedding':

The training and group psychology of combat military units, not to mention combat itself, usually result in the most intense feelings of loyalty and comradeship that soldiers will ever experience. I suspect the Pentagon hopes that this same group psychology will rub off on 'embedded' reporters.

Those who try to report hard, messy facts and ask uncomfortable questions will not only risk ostracism, censorship or expulsion. They may even find themselves rationalizing away and stifling their better journalistic instincts, because their loyalty will have shifted to their military unit and away from us, their reading public.⁵⁷

As noted above, such camaraderie occurred in the Falklands War and the lessons were applied in the 1990–91 Gulf conflict. Having learned the advantages of subsuming the media into the military and making the journalists feel like soldiers, the Allied military initially supplied journalists with uniforms and gear similar to the soldiers. Although this was later withdrawn as rebel journalists used the uniforms as camouflage in their attempts to work outside the pools, it had the desired effect in that journalists begin to phrase their questions in terms of 'we', 'us', and 'our troops'.⁵⁸ Journalists identified with the military spirit and goals, took part in training and fitness tests provided by the army, and adopted military slang. The relationship worked both ways with military commanders considering the pool attached to their units as 'their journalists' and an integrated part of their own forces.⁵⁹

Knighly argues that it is 'useless' to expect the truth from the 'war correspondent-soldier' because any such truth 'might damage the army, the war effort, and the national interests'.⁶⁰ He claims that such correspondents would not write a damaging story, would put a positive twist on a negative story and would probably lie to their readers if the military asked them to. Thus, friendliness between individual journalists and military personnel can result in self-censorship that blunts the media's independence, as can fear of losing access to a source if the source is within the military or the government and is displeased with the journalist's style, content or analysis.⁶¹

It is likely that 'embedding' journalists in military units involved in the conflict in Iraq in 2003 will produce similar effects, as has been noted by at least one reporter currently in the Gulf. Canadian Broadcasting Corporation correspondent Paul Workman queried the ability of journalists to be independent and objective when they are 'sleeping and living with' the soldiers they are trying to cover: 'What happens if there's, say, a friendly fire accident [and] there's a lot of casualties on the field? Is the American military going to let us transmit those pictures?'⁶²

News organisations have acknowledged that 'embedding' may 'raise questions' about journalistic independence, but they argue that these frontline reports will form only part of much broader coverage that will incorporate expert analysis and reports from non-'embedded' journalists.⁶³ In addition, at least one news organisation (CNN) will not allow its reporters to dress in uniforms and equipment supplied by the US military. Rather, CNN says it will issue its journalists with flak jackets and possibly helmets on the basis that 'This differential is essential to maintain objectivity and independence'.⁶⁴

Patriotism and self-censorship

A problem, of course, is that objectivity and independence are not always appreciated at home. Those journalists and media organisations who do not 'go along' with the war effort may find themselves under verbal fire. Media organisations are regularly accused of lacking patriotism and even of treason. Such accusations come from the military, politicians and sections of the media themselves. In 1991, CNN's Peter Arnett was condemned as the 'Joseph Goebbels of Saddam Hussein's Hitler-like regime' for reporting the Allied bombing of a baby-milk plant in Baghdad.⁶⁵ In February 2003, CBS news anchor Dan Rather was denounced for interviewing Saddam Hussein for the network. Critics felt he had been too soft on the Iraqi leader and 'some conservative leaders even went so far as to cast doubts on the 71-year-old newscaster's patriotism'.⁶⁶ As noted above, the Bush Administration criticised the network itself for not giving the White House airtime to rebut Saddam Hussein's claims.

In a democratic society, wars are open to a discussion of their merits. Such analysis by the media is often labelled as a lack of patriotism. For example, during the 1990–91 Gulf conflict, the accredited journalist with the Australian task force was criticised by the military for the 'negative' tone of his stories and for suggesting that Australia was participating for political and not military reasons.⁶⁷ The Australian Broadcasting

Corporation was heavily criticised for a perceived anti-war bias in the selection of its commentators.⁶⁸

Those who demand a 'patriotic' media argue that journalists should not forget that the most important thing in a war is not to send reports home, but to win: 'This means that in a war there are greater tasks than news reporting, and you have to know which side you are on.'⁶⁹ *Daily Express* editor Max Hastings succinctly expressed his view of such media patriotism during the Falklands War, when he quoted his war correspondent father's well-known observation regarding World War II: 'When one's nation is at war, reporting becomes an extension of the war'.⁷⁰

The result is that journalists may impose self-censorship where they consider themselves to be part of the war effort, and in order to protect the operation and its participants. In the 1990–91 conflict, many journalists had no problem with this partly because they, too, had been immersed in the myth of media responsibility for the loss in Vietnam. This may have made them reluctant to question many of the 'facts' the military supplied in case they were seen to harm the war effort. Thus, the US military's rigid control was hardly necessary by January 1991 because, with few exceptions, the media undertook their own self-censorship.⁷¹ One author claims the level of self-censorship in the United States probably exceeded the military's blackout of battlefield news. During the Gulf War:

There was ... a substantial symbiosis between the media and the military authorities with regard to perspectives, partiality, and values. Dressed in combat uniforms, the journalists fought in the very same war on the very same side and for the very same aims as the soldiers, who were responsible for the journalists' security and whose activities the journalists were supposed to be watching.⁷²

There are already signs of the potential for a repeat of the earlier media patriotism and thus self-censorship in the conflict in Iraq in 2003. In the post–September 11 world, many American journalists are openly patriotic, or as one veteran reporter observes: 'Some editors and reporters in American media now see themselves as "patriot police", engaging in jingoism and self-censorship'.⁷³ With regard to the current conflict, Associated Press Washington bureau chief Sandy Johnson has acknowledged that the media's goal is to 'let the American public know how their sons and daughters do at war', but also notes, 'Our goal is to win, also'.⁷⁴

An important question is whether such a 'positive' stance on the part of the media is appropriate during wartime, when the media's role in presenting alternative opinions is vital. For example, much of the discussion with regard to the conflict in Iraq is centred on the issue of whether such action—if undertaken by the United States alone or in partnership with others without United Nations approval—is a just or an unjust war. The media should have a considerable role in presenting all of various viewpoints to the public.

Technology

Modern technology has raised a number of issues for media coverage of the conflict in Iraq.

1) From body bags to the bloodless war

Convinced that the media portrayal of Vietnam as a bloody, endless conflict with a rising toll of young Americans coming home in body bags had weakened the public's resolve to win the war, the US military turned the Gulf War into a clinical, bloodless campaign. As one commentator on media coverage in the Gulf conflict observed:

Human suffering during the war was conspicuous for its absence in the news, there was no body count as in Vietnam, and the image of a clinical, computerised war, which glorified the technological superiority of the alliance, penetrated the media.⁷⁵

Two ideas came to dominate the media coverage of Operations Desert Shield and Desert Storm:

- that the war was being waged against the world's 'fourth largest army', which comprised a 'highly-trained elite Republican Guard'
- that this justified the Allies putting on history's first high-technology 'Nintendo-like' electronic war complete with 'smart bombs' and night-time transmission of light shows.⁷⁶

The US military placed heavy emphasis on presenting sanitised images of this new kind of high technology war between machines, not men. Information given out at media briefings concentrated on 'Patriot' missile interception successes and 'smart bomb' statistics, with purposeful avoidance of casualty figures. Few corpses from either side were seen, not just to keep information on casualty figures from the enemy but to prevent pictures of the dead and injured reaching relatives back home. Only at the end did more bloody images appear—recall, for example, the aforementioned gruesome pictures of the Allied 'turkey shoot' of the fleeing Iraqi forces on the road to Basra.

Technology-driven jargon

The importance of a new military-technical jargon in creating the image of a bloodless war cannot be over-emphasised. The military's 'un-bloody' clinical jargon to describe all aspects of the 1990–91 conflict became part of the media's—and thus the public's—daily language.

Australian Broadcasting Corporation producer Trevor Bormann, who was in a media pool in Saudi Arabia at the time, says journalists were 'fed this diet of great spin terms' that 'sounded very impressive':

We were told about 'collateral damage', which meant that the bomb missed and hit a house and probably killed a few kids. We heard about 'target-rich environments', which meant that they had plenty of things to shoot at. All of these terms served to desensitise war to a certain extent. Before we know it, it becomes part of mainstream journalistic language ...⁷⁷

Bormann says that, although journalists think that they are 'too smart ... to be seduced by this kind of language', it easily becomes part of the language that they use in their reports.

Already, in March 2003, the blitz of new terms—and the resurgence of old terms—has started. Media reports note that the United States plans a 'quick, surgical intervention' in Iraq, with the 'unleashing [of] 3000 precision-guided bombs in the first 48 hours of a short air campaign'.⁷⁸ It is worth recalling here that the claims about the 'precision' of such weapons in the earlier conflict later turned out to be greatly exaggerated. A Reuters story published in the New Zealand media reports that the US military aims to minimise civilian casualties in the conflict in Iraq 'by using guided weapons and a mathematical formula known as "bug splat"'.⁷⁹ This report notes that, in addition, the military will 'use "non-lethal" weapons, such as "offensive electronics", when appropriate'.

II) 'Gee-whiz gizmo technology reporting'

Modern technology has dramatically changed the nature and type of reports that are filed from a conflict zone. Veteran war correspondent Peter Arnett describes how, in the early days of the Vietnam War, journalists had to send their copy by Morse code to Tokyo to be sent on to the United States.⁸⁰ By the 1990–91 Gulf conflict, the media had access to equipment that enabled stories and pictures to be transmitted in real time to hundreds of millions of people around the world.

Two points can be made about technology and reporting in the 1990–91 conflict that remain applicable today:

- in the absence of 'live war' copy to fill space, the media focused on the new weapons of the Allied forces and bombarded the public with information about what the technology could achieve. Arguably, however, what the media needed was neither its own high-technology to cover the war nor information about the sophisticated weaponry of the Allied forces, but an ability to digest and make some sense of the huge amount of data generated in the conflict.⁸¹ An appreciation of the broad strategic picture is essential in order to place the individual skirmishes in context. A difficulty is that the media suffer from the 'fog of war' in which their focus on single or multiple narrow actions obscures the bigger picture
- the media's new technologies, which allowed 'live' round-the-clock broadcasts and an overwhelming amount of news, tended to obscure the fact that most broadcasts were still Western in character and bias, and relatively devoid of facts and substance.⁸²

Today, the technology is even more sophisticated than in 1990–91: reporters are not weighed down with heavy camera equipment, nor do they require large numbers of crew to compile their reports. Rather, 'All the gadgets a reporter needs can be carried in a single suitcase that fits in the overhead compartment of most planes'.⁸³ This means that journalists will be able to transmit a myriad of reports from the front, almost instantaneously. The danger is that such reports will be shallow, based on "'gee-whiz gizmo technology reporting" with little substance'.⁸⁴

This is especially likely given the increased use in news reports of 'lipstick' cameras and 'helmet-mounted' cameras, which create the 'you are there' feel of reality television shows. The United States guidelines for 'embedded' journalists say that the use of such cameras on 'combat sorties' is to be 'approved and encouraged to the greatest extent possible'.⁸⁵ The problem is that such stories are likely to comprise footage of a military unit in action that is devoid of context and meaning. In this way, it reduces the coverage of conflict to 'infotainment' of the kind offered by such shows as 'Survivor' and 'Big Brother'.

'Embedded' reporters will be able to supply detailed information on the units within which they are stationed, but for the public to receive a complete picture of what is happening in the conflict, it is essential that such reports be placed within a broader analytical framework.

III) Alternative sources of information

Modern technology raises a new problem for both the military and the mainstream media: today's communications technologies allow the public to seek and receive a range of alternative views of any conflict. Readers and viewers are increasingly technologically literate and are able to cross-reference the information they receive from their own media with that supplied by other sources, including those from non-Western media. An Arabic version of CNN, Al Jazeera, has a crew 'embedded' in an American military unit, thus offering a non-Western perspective from the Western side. CNN chief news executive Eason Jordan has credited Al Jazeera with supplying for American viewers many of the battle images from the war in Afghanistan in 2001, including those of civilian casualties from American bombing raids.⁸⁶

Of course, access to multiple sources of information is not a panacea to propaganda as the dissemination of untruths, half-truths and misinformation is more insidious: increased access to a broader range of information is no guarantee that any of the information obtained is 'the truth'. That said, journalist Owen Gibson notes that today's world of 'instant views and news at the click of a mouse' is a hostile environment for propaganda and it is harder to control a public's perception of a conflict:

When Allied forces were last on their way to the Gulf in 1991, the internet was little more than a gaggle of bearded academics swapping information on their latest computer programs. ... But now 24-hour news is commonplace, it is the web that is opening up a world of different perspectives and viewpoints.

As we've seen over the past two years, from September 11 to the subsequent war on terror and the current countdown to war, after the initial rush towards recognised news sources such as the BBC and CNN, web users started to cast their net far wider as they searched for explanation and context. ... just last week, interested parties were able to flick from the French press to the US tabloids and back again to see how differing views on the war were taking shape.⁸⁷

Gibson argues that the Internet provides access to 'a greater diversity of viewpoints and a more international viewpoint':

Put simply, when you have a worldwide depository of millions of points of view, the propaganda war becomes a lot harder to win. ... The key thing is that it now only takes a few minutes to search through several lifetimes' worth of information—and access to that huge archive is not restricted to journalists, academics or government officials, but open to all.⁸⁸

While Gibson's points are valid, he overlooks a major difficulty with information accessed via the Internet: that is, that the World Wide Web presents all stories and all information as equal. In addition, many web sites are either overtly or covertly biased in the selection of information they present and those responsible for establishing and maintaining the site are not always easily identifiable. This is a problem if a public suspicious of official information coming through mainstream media turns to that coming through alternative, 'bottom up' rather than 'top down' sources without maintaining the same degree of scepticism.

In an interesting twist, some of the alternative information available online may come from members of the United States military themselves. A March 2003 *New York Times* report notes that some military units in the 'Persian Gulf region, Afghanistan and elsewhere' have started to clamp down on the email communications of their soldiers and sailors for fear that they might be leaking sensitive information in their messages to family and friends.⁸⁹ The report noted:

What worries computer and military experts is the possibility that enemy forces may obtain a soldier's message home that ends up being forwarded to someone sympathetic to Iraq, or that outsiders might simply view a picture published on a publicly accessible Web site.⁹⁰

An air force memorandum cited in the report claims that 'sensitive photos of forward operating bases' had been posted on the Internet—some on an anti-American web site—and warns that 'adversaries could collect these photos and use them to plan attacks against United States forces'. The report notes that, as a result of these concerns, service personnel have been warned not to include their location, current or future operations, and 'comments about troops morale' in their communications back home.

The inability of the United States military to control all forms of modern communication may underlie its decision to ease its attempts to control the media. That is, Pentagon

officials are reported to have said that it is 'in their interests to provide Western news media access to combat zones to counteract the potential for Iraqi disinformation that could be distributed by Arab news outlets'.⁹¹ But it is not only the Arab news outlets that may concern the military—there are many alternative forms of communication, including the Internet, email and mobile phones.

Thus, today's readers, viewers and listeners may not be as vulnerable as they were previously to media manipulation because they can access alternative sources of information. Of course, this raises a new problem: that of 'information overload', which may have two consequences:

- people will 'tune out' rather than 'tune in'
- people will turn back to traditional forms of media, which specialise in prioritising, and thereby limiting, the amount of information passed to the public.

Another reason that the public may choose to 'tune out' is that modern technology allows the media to supply information that viewers may prefer not to see. That is, the images that portable satellite dishes and video-phones allow journalists to beam back home from the battlefield almost instantaneously may be too graphic, even for audiences accustomed to 'reality TV'. While ratings and newspaper sales demonstrate that the public wants the right to be thrilled, horrified and otherwise titillated by armed conflict as infotainment, it is possible they will find that too many images of blood and carnage are unpalatable.

War correspondents or witnesses?

The modern technologies discussed in the previous section raise another issue that, thus far, has received little attention: that the technology that gives journalists mobility and allows them to record every aspect of a conflict opens the possibility of their being called as witnesses in any subsequent war crimes trials. Traditionally, the notions of neutrality and independence have protected war correspondents, but this appears to be changing and has considerable implications for the future safety of journalists in the field.

However, while news organisation managers sending their staff to the Gulf in 2003 have recognised—and are excited at the prospect—that 'those little digital cameras ... could end up documenting this war', they have not explored the potential repercussions for journalists.⁹² Thus, when *Newsweek* editor Mark Whitaker says, 'Anybody who is sort of in the right place at the right time—a firefight, for instance—could end up playing a major role', he does not appear to consider that the 'major role' could be as a witness in court.⁹³

Whether or not journalists can—or should—testify in war crimes courts has become a significant issue for journalists who covered the Balkan wars, many of whom have been subpoenaed to appear in the courtrooms of the International Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia.⁹⁴ While some have agreed to appear, saying they have a 'moral duty' to bear witness, others have declined, citing professional principles, such as 'impartiality' and the

'watchdog role of the news media'. Those who decline claim that it is enough for prosecutors to 'read our stories', but one report notes that war-crimes investigators are more interested in evidence proving 'command and control responsibility' for atrocities than in 'eyewitness accounts of atrocities'.⁹⁵

The Rules of Procedure for the International Criminal Court provide no special exemptions for journalists, although they allow for a range of other exemptions.⁹⁶ Therefore, the principles to be applied to journalists will need to be developed in the context of future cases. No doubt, if privilege is claimed, the International Criminal Court will look to the practice of the existing International Criminal Tribunals for Former Yugoslavia and the International Criminal Tribunals for Rwanda. In December 2002, the former ruled on appeal that reporters may not be subpoenaed routinely to testify in war crimes cases before the court.⁹⁷ The ruling established a two-part test before a war correspondent may be subpoenaed. First, it must be shown that the testimony 'is of direct and important value to determining a core issue in the case', and second, it must be demonstrated that the evidence cannot reasonably be obtained elsewhere.⁹⁸ The International Press Institute in Vienna praised the ruling and said that it hoped the ruling would be a precedent for other courts.

But it is here that a danger for 'embedded' journalists may lie. Not only will their portable cameras give them access to 'some of the most graphic and revealing war footage ... ever', but they will observe—and possibly capture on film or in digital image—every detail of their unit's daily operations, including those details that may prove responsibility for atrocities. While some of that material will find its way into the public arena, and is arguably available to a future war crimes tribunal, not all material will do so. Most of those journalists who have resisted giving evidence in The Hague have been American, but British journalists 'took the stand early and wrote proudly about it'.⁹⁹ The US military has given 100 of the 500 'embedded' placements to non-American media, including British journalists. The question is whether, should a war crimes tribunal be established over actions in Iraq, whether these journalists could be called as witnesses.

The potential for journalists to be called as witnesses in war crimes investigations may increase the danger to their personal safety. CNN international networks president Chris Cramer says today's journalists 'are being killed at an unacceptable and unprecedented rate':

They are doing a professional job, but are being confused with representatives of their native countries' governments. Gone are the days when journalists were looked on as members of a sacred profession and not to be harmed. Indeed, they are more likely, some say, to be killed in the line of duty than are members of the armed forces.¹⁰⁰

As an example, eight reporters were killed in a 16-day period while covering the war in Afghanistan in 2001.¹⁰¹

Knightley notes that war reporting has always been a 'risky job', but today it is even more dangerous because combatants are targeting journalists. War correspondents seen as 'the bearers of bad news' and 'vultures who exploited human suffering' are now considered to be legitimate targets. (This is not to argue that journalists have not been 'targets' in earlier wars. Journalist Jack Shafer notes that unarmed journalists were not 'protected' until after World War II when the Geneva Convention proscribed soldiers from targeting or detaining them.¹⁰²)

Conclusions

The war in Iraq again raises the issue of media coverage of conflict and the public's right to know. While the news that the United States military will 'embed' 500 journalists, including 100 non-American journalists, with its front-line forces implies that readers and viewers world-wide will receive a full picture of any action undertaken, past evidence suggests that this may not necessarily be the case.

An inherent tension between the goals of the media and those of the military gives the latter an incentive to attempt to control the information transmitted to the public in order to ensure public support for the conflict. Such controls have proved successful over the past two decades, and were especially so in the previous Gulf conflict in 1990–91. In hindsight, it was obvious that many of the stories relayed to the public were not true and were, in fact, part of a deliberate campaign of misinformation.

The United States military has argued that 'embedding' is a way for the truth to be told, with reporters able to observe 'the factual story' first hand. However, as was clear from the experience of 'embedding' in the Falklands War and the 'pools' of the Gulf War, there is a tendency for journalists accompanying military personnel to be seconded to the cause in ways that may impair their objectivity and result in self-censorship. The result is that the public may not be offered the alternative views that would help them to decide whether or not to support a conflict.

The implications of this identification and sympathy with the military in today's conflict in Iraq are especially important given the split in public opinion as to whether such action is justified. Australian poll results published on 18 March 2003 showed that 68 per cent of respondents were against Australia's involvement in military action against Iraq without United Nations approval.¹⁰³ Only 25 per cent of respondents were in favour of such action. As the United States-led forces began their moves against Iraq, *New York Times* commentator Thomas Friedman stressed the importance to the United States of convincing its traditional friends that its actions are legitimate, noting: 'we need to patch things up with the world'.¹⁰⁴ Such patching up will require winning not just the hearts and minds of Americans, but of citizens in other countries, including Australia. Information is a key weapon in this battle.

Meanwhile, the anticipated benefits of modern technology that frees reporters to wander around the front line, unencumbered by heavy equipment and extra crew members, may

not materialise. While the media now has the ability to transmit reports almost instantaneously from the battlefield to the readers and viewers back home, the military has the ability to control such transmissions, by jamming signals or seizing equipment. In addition, some non-embedded journalists fear that their sophisticated equipment may make them easy targets for both the United States-led forces and the Iraqi military.

For the reading and viewing public, there is a danger that coverage will once again rely heavily on the appealing footage of fireworks-like modern weaponry and the bloodless jargon in which its use is described. The result may be too much detail and not enough substance.

For journalists, there is a danger that their 'embedded' access to the battlefield combined with their ability to capture on film or in digital image graphic and revealing footage will make them vulnerable to being called as witnesses in cases of alleged war crimes. Such outcomes fundamentally alter the role of war correspondents and may jeopardise their 'neutral' status.

While Australia's contribution to the attack on Iraq will be physically small in comparison to that of the United States or the United Kingdom, the action will be undertaken with Australian agreement. Australia may have different 'rules of engagement', as Defence Minister Robert Hill has made clear, but it will be no mere bystander.¹⁰⁵ Australians have a right to expect to be kept fully—and factually—informed about what is being done by the Australian Defence Force and coalition forces in their name.

Endonotes

1. Sally Jackson, 'Baghdad Blitz', *The Australian*, 6 March 2003, Lindsay Murdoch, 'Close-up view for media at the front', *The Age*, 14 March 2003, and Phillip Coorey, 'Shooting the action', *Daily Telegraph*, 1 March 2003.
2. The guidelines document, 'Public Affairs Guidance (PAG) on embedding media during possible future operations/deployment in the U.S. Central Commands (CENTCOM) area of responsibility (AOR)', can be found on the United States Department of Defense Defense Link web site at: www.defenselink.mil/news/Feb2003/d20030228pag.pdf
3. *ibid.*
4. Peter Johnson, 'Media's war footing looks solid', *USA Today*, 17 February 2003.
5. Patrick Barrett, 'US reporters condemn Pentagon press controls', *The Guardian*, 27 February 2003.
6. See, for example, the Committee to Protect Journalists' letter to US Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld, www.cpj.org/protests/03ltrs/USA06march03pl.html. The Committee to Protect Journalists is a non-partisan, non-profit organisation founded in 1981 to monitor abuses against the press and promote press freedom around the world.

7. Barrett, op. cit., and Greg Mitchell, 'Schanberg's take on the Pentagon's media rules', *Editor & Publisher*, 24 February 2003. As military academic Douglas Porch observes: 'Loose lips sink not only ships but careers'. See Douglas Porch, "'No bad stories": the American media-military relationship', *Naval War College Review*, vol. LV, no. 1, Winter 2002, p. 98.
8. Committee to Protect Journalists, op. cit.
9. Mark Forbes, 'Australians urged to flee or risk being hostages', *The Age*, 18 March 2003.
10. Hugh Riminton, 'Hugh Riminton in Baghdad', Today Show transcript, ninemsn, http://news.ninemsn.com.au/Special/story_46770.asp.
11. *ibid.*
12. Jim Rutenberg, 'U.S. news organizations tell employees to leave Baghdad', *New York Times*, 19 March 2003, www.nytimes.com/2003/03/19/national/19MEDI.html.
13. Kate Adie, transcript of interview with Irish national broadcaster Tom McGurk on the RTE1 Radio 'Sunday Show', www.gulufuture.com/news/kate_adie030310.htm
14. *ibid.*
15. Robert Fisk, 'The war of words and pictures has begun', *Canberra Times*, 18 March 2003.
16. Jackson, op. cit.
17. *ibid.*
18. Coorey, op. cit.
19. 'Free reporting is best defence', *The Australian*, 5 March 2003.
20. Hannan says the way the SAS operates must be kept secret because of the role they play in countering terrorism in Australia. See Murdoch, op. cit.
21. *ibid.* This report cites Hannan saying: 'If it [embedding] was doable we would have done it'.
22. Jackson says Hannan would not say where the forces were based and which countries he was talking about, but she speculates that they include Qatar and Saudi Arabia: 'neither is renowned for press freedom'. Jackson, op. cit.
23. Australian Defence Force, Media Briefing, 'Australia's commitment to global operations', transcript, 20 March 2003, www.defence.gov.au/media/2003/temp/200303.htm
24. Public Affairs Guidance, op. cit.
25. ABC Online, *The World Today*, 19 March 2003, www.abc.net.au/worldtoday/content/2003/s810958.htm
26. The right to seek, receive and impart information and ideas of all kinds is a constituent element of the right to freedom of expression (Art.19 ICCPR). The right to seek information protects the right of active inquiry and is particularly relevant to the media. However, the right to freedom of expression, which is often discussed as an absolute right, may be subject to limitations on the grounds of national security. Such a limitation must be strictly limited to that which is necessary and must also be provided for by law if it is to be consistent with the obligation under Article 19.
27. J. B. Sykes (ed.), *The Concise Oxford Dictionary of Current English*, sixth edition, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1976, p. 752.

28. See the discussion in Chapter 1, 'The changed nature of war and duties of the citizen in time of war', in Peter Young and Peter Jesser, *The Media and the Military: From Crimea to Desert Strike*, Macmillan Education Australia Pty Ltd, South Melbourne, 1997.
29. Richard Mchamer, 'Avoiding a military-media war in the next armed conflict', *Military Review*, vol. LXXIII, no. 4, April 1993, p. 44.
30. In another poll of American television station ABC coverage in early February 1991, 83 per cent of 652,000 respondents were critical of the media, complaining that journalists were endangering lives and undermining the war effort.
31. Canberra bureau chief for News Limited Ian McPhedran complained in early March 2003 about the lack of information about Australian troops deployed in the Middle East, arguing: 'From the point of view of the Australian public, who pay for this, I think that's pretty appalling.' In a similar vein, Australian Broadcasting Corporation head of news and current affairs Max Uechtritz argued for Australian media to have access to the conflict: 'When Australia is sending its sons and daughters off to war we have an obligation to give Australians every bit of information we can about their involvement.' See Jackson, *ibid*.
32. Article 19, ICCPR.
33. Frank Aukofer and William Lawrence, *America's team: the odd couple—a report on the relationship between the media and the military*, Freedom Forum First Amendment Center, Nashville, Tennessee, 1995, p.24.
34. *ibid*.
35. Philip Taylor, *War and the media: propaganda and persuasion in the Gulf War*, Manchester University Press, Manchester, 1992, p. 273. Re journalists having 'no rank': While there is a hierarchy within any corporation, including media organisations, a group of journalists on the battlefield representing different organisations will have no hierarchical structure.
36. Clem Lloyd, 'The case for the media', in Peter Young (ed.), *Defence and the Media in Time of Limited Conflict*, Frank Cass & Co. Ltd, London, 1992, p. 64.
37. Aukofer and Lawrence, *op. cit.* p. 29.
38. Valerie Adams, *The Media and the Falklands Campaign*, Macmillan Press, London and Basingstoke, 1986, p. 47
39. David Morrison and Howard Tumber, *Journalists at War*, Sage Publications, London, 1988, p. 97. See Chapter 6, "'It's all right; I am British, after all"—a theory of change and change in theory', for interviews with journalists about their growing sympathy with the troops.
40. For newspaper journalists, colour stories -- the only opportunity for individual coverage within the pool system in which all hard news stories were shared -- were seen as a burden by the Navy, whose communications facilities were limited. At one point about 30 per cent of the daily work load of the HMS *Invincible's* communications centre was devoted to media reports, which led to journalists being limited to 700 words each per day.
41. Stig Nohrstedt, 'Ruling by pooling', in Hamid Mowlana, George Gerbner and Herbert Schiller, *Triumph of the Image: the Media's War in the Persian Gulf*, Westview Press, Boulder, Colorado, 1992, p. 118.
42. Journalist Patrick Sloyan, who was reporting the 1990–91 conflict, writes: 'More than 70 operating outside the pool system were arrested, detained, threatened at gunpoint or chased

from the front line.' See Patrick Sloyan, 'What I saw was a bunch of filled-in trenches with people's arms and legs sticking out of them. For all I know, we could have killed thousands', *The Guardian*, 14 February 2003.

43. *ibid.*
44. Journalist Ronald Brownstein writes:

After the gulf war, several studies challenged the image of precision, high-tech bombing that dominated the official briefings and television coverage of the war. Contrary to dramatic footage at one briefing that apparently showed U.S. bombs destroying a mobile launcher carrying Iraqi Scud missiles, the official Air Force review of the war found no evidence any mobile Scuds were destroyed in the air.

Ronald Brownstein, 'Wartime briefings can be subjective, history shows', *Chicago Tribune*, 11 October 2001.
45. Phillip Knightley, 'No more heroes: war correspondents retreat from the front line', IPI Report no. 1, 2000, www.freemedia.at/IPIReport1.00/IPIRep1.00_Truth.htm, and Phillip Knightley, *The First Casualty: the War Correspondent as hero and myth-maker from the Crimea to Kosovo*, Prion Books, London, 2000, p. 525.
46. See, for example, Associated Press, 'War on terrorism revives tension between press, government', freedomforum.org, 25 September 2001.
47. Coorey, *op. cit.*
48. Joel Campagna, 'Introduction: Build-up in the Gulf', Committee to Protect Journalists, www.cpj.org/Briefings/2003/gulf03/gulf03.html.
49. *ibid.*
50. Public Affairs Guidance, *op. cit.*
51. *ibid.*
52. Robert Fisk, 'The media column: war journalists should not be cosyng up to the military', *The Independent*, 21 January 2003.
53. Hampton Sides, 'Unembedded', *The New Yorker*, 24 March 2003, posted on the Internet 17 March 2003, www.newyorker.com/talk/content/?030324ta_talk_sides
54. Coorey, *op. cit.*
55. *ibid.*
56. Johnson, *op. cit.*
57. E. M. Cowardin Jr, 'Letter to the Editor', *New York Times*, 19 February 2003.
58. There is a great deal of overlap between the comments of the journalists cited in Morrison and Tumber, *op. cit.*, and those of the journalists in the 'pools' in the Gulf conflict of 1990–91. See for example, Nohrstedt, *op. cit.*
59. Rune Ottosen, 'Truth: the first victim of war', in Mowlana et. al., *op. cit.*, p. 140.
60. www.geocities.com/cpa_blacktown/20000709zzzpkcpbuk.htm
61. Taylor, *op. cit.*, p. 174. Taylor quotes a British journalist who, during the Gulf War, was one of a group of journalists who shared a hotel—and became friendly—with RAF Tornado crews to the

extent that the journalists, wishing not to offend their new friends, operated under 'such a stringent form of self- censorship ... that the Squadron Leader PRO could put his feet up'.

62. 'Correspondent's Report', Australian Broadcasting Corporation, 23 February 2003, www.abc.net.au/correspondents/s790551.htm. Of the roughly 150 Americans killed in Operations Desert Shield and Desert Storm, about 35 died as a result of 'friendly fire'.
63. Coorey, op. cit.
64. Chris Cramer, 'Danger: media at work', *The Guardian*, 24 February 2003. Cramer is the president of CNN international networks.
65. Peter Arnett, 'You are the Goebbels of Saddam's regime', *The Guardian*, 14 February 2003.
66. Jason Deans, 'Rather's Hussein scoop draws 17m', *The Guardian*, 28 February 2003.
67. Terry O'Connor, 'Personal experience of Australia's public information in time of war,' in Peter R. Young (ed.), *Defence and the media in time of limited conflict*, Frank Cass & Co. Ltd, London, 1992, p. 263.
68. The ABC was also threatened with funding cuts for initially not agreeing to Radio Australia, whose reputation depends on its being seen to be independent of government, being used to transmit messages to RAN sailors in the Gulf. See Rodney Tiffen, 'The second casualty: the ABC and the Gulf War', *Current Affairs Bulletin*, April 1991, pp. 13–14.
69. Ottosen, op. cit., p. 138.
70. Cited in Kevin Foster, 'The Falklands War: a Critical View of Information Policy', in Jesser, op. cit., p. 158.
71. Herbert Schiller, 'Manipulating hearts and minds', in Mowlana et. al., op. cit., p. 25.
72. Nohrstedt, op. cit., p. 126.
73. Robert Wiener, 'Truth may sink in desert sand', *Los Angeles Times*, 20 January 2003. Wiener has been a journalist for more than 30 years and was CNN's executive producer in Baghdad when the Gulf War erupted. On the post-September 11 'patriotism', recall also the American talk-show host who was slated in the media, and whose show was dropped from several television stations, because he said the September 11 hijackers were not cowards because they had the courage to stay in the planes that they crashed into the World Trade Centre.
74. Johnson, op. cit.
75. Nohrstedt, op. cit., p. 118.
76. Andre Gunder Frank, 'A Third-World War: a political economy of the Persian Gulf War and the New World Order', in Mowlana, et. al., op. cit., p. 21.
77. Trevor Bormann interview with Mick O'Regan, 'The Media Report', *Radio National*, 6 February 2003, www.abc.net.au/rn/talks/8.30/mediarpt/stories/s777173.htm.
78. Dan Plesch, 'Quick, surgical intervention is the plan', *The Age*, 20 February 2003, and Eric Schmitt and Elisabeth Bumiller, 'Top general sees plan to shock Iraq into surrendering', *New York Times*, 5 March 2003. Military officials are quoted as saying that 'precision weapons' will account for about 70 per cent of the weapons used in this conflict compared with 20 per cent in the 1991 Gulf War and US forces would 'match weapons with targets to avoid civilian casualties'.

79. Tabassum Zakaria, "'Bug splat' formula to minimise civilian casualties', Reuters report carried in the *New Zealand Herald*, 7 March 2003.
80. Peter Arnett, 'Reflections on Vietnam, the Press and America', *Nieman Reports*, vol. 26, no. 1, March 1972, p. 6.
81. For example, there was a distinct lack of analysis comparing the sheer number of bombing raids over Iraq with the claims that the Allies were targeting only military-related facilities. After the war, one journalist cited a United Nations report noting that the attacks on power plants, oil refineries and other elements of Iraq's infrastructure suggested a more destructive plan than simply annihilating Iraq's military facilities—one designed to return Iraq to a 'pre-industrial age'. See Michael Massing, 'Another front', *Columbia Journalism Review*, vol. 29, May/June 1991, p. 24.
82. Taylor, *op. cit.*, p. 34.
83. Johnson, *op. cit.*
84. *ibid.*
85. Public Affairs Guidance, *op. cit.*, clause 7B.
86. Josh Getlin, 'The war beat-up: will "embedding" slant reporting', *Seattle Times*, 16 March 2003.
87. Owen Gibson, 'Spin caught in a web trap', *The Guardian*, 17 February 2003.
88. *ibid.*
89. Matt Richtel, 'Military to clamp down on e-mail', *New York Times*, 12 March 2003.
90. *ibid.*
91. Gorman, *op. cit.*
92. Johnson, *op. cit.*
93. *ibid.*
94. Nina Bernstein, 'Can war reporters be witnesses, too?', *New York Times*, 14 December 2002.
95. *ibid.*
96. The rules exempt privileged communications between witnesses and their lawyers and grant the court a discretion to exempt communications made in the context of other confidential relationships. See Rule 73. Medical doctors, psychiatrists, psychologists, counsellors and the clergy (especially confessions) are given special recognition and the officials of the International Committee of the Red Cross are generally, although not entirely, exempt from giving evidence.
97. The ruling came in the genocide trial of Bosnian Serb Radoslav Brdjanin, and excused UN reporter Jonathan Randal from being required to testify.
98. In this case, the evidence of Brdjanin's intention to commit genocide (a crucial element of the crime) was already in the public arena as he had been quoted in a *Washington Post* article in 1993 as saying that anyone unwilling to defend Bosnian Serb territory should be moved out to achieve an 'ethically clean space'.
99. Bernstein, *op. cit.*

100. Cramer, op. cit.
101. Campagna, op. cit.
102. Jack Shafer, 'Full metal junket: the myth of the objective war correspondent', *Slate* (an online magazine), www.slate.msn.com/id/2079703/.
103. Denis Shanahan, 'Howard winning own war at home', *The Australian*, 18 March 2003. The poll was conducted in the week 14–16 March 2003.
104. Thomas Friedman, 'D-Day', *New York Times*, 19 March 2003.
105. See Cosima Marriner, 'Legal landmines confronting troops', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 22 March 2003; Cosima Marriner, 'Australia will fight by its own rules, Hill vows', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 20 March 2003; Don Woolford, 'Our soldiers will not attack civilians', *Canberra Times*, 20 March 2003; and John Kerin, 'Troops wrestle with different war rules', *The Australian*, 19 March 2003. A report of 24 March indicated that Australian air force pilots had refused to bomb a target in Iraq despite orders from American commanders because they feared the target 'was not legitimate under the separate rules of engagement for Australian forces in the war'. See Ross Peake, 'Aussie pilots defy US orders to bomb target', *Canberra Times*, 24 March 2003.