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# EDWARD KENNEDY: The reporter at war

Michael Scully

ASSOCIATED PRESS WAR CORRESPONDENT Edward Kennedy (1905–1963) was among the 17 journalists chosen to witness Germany's surrender, ending Allied combat operations in Europe during World War II (Knightley, 2002). While en route to the early morning meeting, all members of the press corps were warned that the story was under embargo until Supreme Headquarters Allied Expeditionary Force (or SHAEF) issued its official release. After the event, the armed services placed a 36-hour embargo on the story; when Edward Kennedy broke that embargo, he told the world that the war with Germany was over – and paid dearly for his actions. In the weeks and months following his news scoop, Kennedy had his press credentials pulled, and the Associated Press began pressuring him to resign. When he did so, his career disintegrated and his life unraveled. In 1963, as he walked home from work, he was mowed down by a young driver in California (Kennedy, 2012). In May 2012, after nearly seven decades, the Associated Press finally issued an apology to Edward Kennedy and his family; and while the family may welcome this exoneration, the ethical implications of his story and the relationship war correspondents (both present and past) share with the US military continue to bear review.

While the craft of journalism has been around for more than four centuries, the process of war reporting remains an ill-defined aspect of the field. Yes, there have been reporters covering wars for many years, but in an age of modern warfare there really isn't a single or coherent definition of, or prescription for, how the war journalist goes about covering conflict. This is due, chiefly, to the sporadic nature of military conflict: during times of peace, the institutional knowledge of the war correspondent fades, while military officials continue to develop newer and more sophisticated methods designed to distract, deter and define the role of the reporter at war.

In the US wars of this century, war correspondents were issued wireless digital equipment and 'embedded' with field troops as they moved through the war theater, and the resulting news coverage was astounding. During the opening days of the US invasion of Iraq, war reporters would send live video news accounts from the field via satellite link-up to their host television news organizations. In most cases, the images were blurry and pixelated but the audio was relatively strong and the reporting was (typically) breathless, but sent in 'real time'. To the viewer, these reports offered an instantaneous look inside the world of the combat soldier. Unfortunately, absent any depth or analysis, the stories were often two-dimensional accounts of roadside encounters leading to the Iraqi capital, Baghdad. Missing from these live events was a sense of perspective detailing casualty numbers or any measure of success of the overall advance.

Without perspective, these field reports failed to reveal relevant information; instead, viewers saw patriotic missives from war correspondents and their US military field units as they raced to convergence in Baghdad. The George W. Bush

administration and the Pentagon were thrilled with the overall success of the media campaign: Baghdad had fallen in weeks and the whole thing was broadcast live and without substantive challenge (Linder, 2008).

If you tear back the veneer of digital news tools, the coverage of the US War on Terror was not very different from the way many other US conflicts were covered. The US military controlled the news in a way that encouraged a positive pro-American interpretation of the action as US forces moved across Iraq. The Pentagon did this by ‘enlisting’ the media (Tumber, 2004) and attaching them to military units where each correspondent was sheltered, clothed, fed, transported and protected. That way, the media were controlled, tempered and regulated and the news reflected that (Linder, 2008). That model found sweeping success during World War II, was lost during the less-popular Korean and Vietnam wars, but was reconstituted in time for the most recent US conflicts.

If we understand independence and impartiality to be central values of journalism, it’s clear war correspondents are losing to a military that may have finally perfected its approach to news management, control and censorship. However, history teaches us that even when some aspect of war reporting is controlled by the US military, the war correspondent can still exercise some independence. Unfortunately for him, this is exactly what Ed Kennedy (1948) did – he rejected the military’s control over his craft – and he did so at a time when, as today, it was unconventional; in addition to the US military’s retribution, many of his peers scorned him, and he was soundly punished for his actions.

This essay will first explore the history of the war correspondent, particularly in World War II, and then examine Edward Kennedy’s role in breaking the story of the end of the war in Europe to the American people. Then, the essay analyses the implications of Kennedy’s story. Finally, it ends with a modest suggestion that could help shape the future of reporting during conflict.

### **History of War Correspondency**

Most journalism historians believe that reporter William Howard Russell (Knightley, 2002) served as the first modern war correspondent when *The Times* of London dispatched him to cover the Crimean War in 1854. During his 22 months in the field, Russell suffered a contentious relationship with the British military. He was treated with contempt; he was forced to procure his own rations, housing, clothing and transportation; he was denied access to military personnel; when he reported something negatively, he had his patriotism challenged repeatedly; and he was censored both in the field and at home. Overall, Russell’s experience was a snapshot of the challenges that awaited his followers as they covered the conflicts.

By 1920, the duties of the war correspondent were still very much undefined. Even though most of the Western world was drawn into the First World War, few journalism protocols were established simply because censorship was so severe. In peacetime, however, journalism had developed an ethos. There were rules for the modern journalist. It was the responsibility of the news writer to be independent, agnostic and free thinking; one was not allowed to write with patriotic flair; reports had to be true accounts of actual events; and the journalist had to work without any prejudices. Proof of these canons found their way into American press organizations and, in 1922, the American Society of News Editors published its ‘State of Prin-

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principles', for all news producers. These called for, among other things, accountability; independence; truth and accuracy; responsibility; impartiality; and fair play.

By the mid-1920s, this list of modern tenets of honest news reporting had been established. And because the war correspondent is a subset of the news community, one needn't make too much of a leap in logic to assume that these same rules should apply to journalists reporting on war.

Nonetheless, the business of the war correspondent is also a special case: covering the news and speaking truth to power can be tricky enough responsibilities; but when you consider that a careless news reporter can also be killed for his/her actions, the prospect of newsgathering in a war theatre can be downright intimidating.

This element of heightened mortality also creates a tricky relationship between war correspondents and the military operations they're assigned to cover (Tumber, 2004): On one hand, the journalist must remain objective; on the other, he/she must depend upon the military for protection, and often now food, clothing, transportation and shelter. Given the closeness of this contact, it is easy to understand how even the most serious reporter can lose sight of objectivity while moving through a battlefield under the careful protection of the military (Lindner, 2008).

Then there is the issue of national security. Since the American Civil War military leaders have laboured to find a way to work with war correspondents (Knightley, 2002: 19). Questions still remain over how much information should be reported about troop movements, sanitary conditions, new technologies, fatalities, failed and failing campaigns, atrocities and so forth. So far, there has been no wartime model for evenhandedness. Too much information can be caustic to the war effort; too little and a veneer of propaganda taints the accuracy of the reporting of events.

In fact, during the last century and a half, there have been many approaches to censorship and how wars are covered. By the end of World War I, the US military had cultivated a culture of censorship (Knightley, 2002) that all but extinguished any actual news from emerging from the European war front, through the supply lines, to the readers in the United States. An uneasy detente had been formed and the news corps, post World War I, often found themselves to be impotent and inert. In times of war, the modern war correspondent had to contend with access issues, muddled and distorted military reportage, and outright censorship.

In addition to these barriers, war correspondents must also deal with the pressures placed upon them by their colleagues, editors, employers, professional peers, and the public at large. Throughout the US involvement in World War II, pressures were in place that ensured most of the war reportage written by US war correspondents supported the US 'war effort'. During the four-year conflict, it was rare that a war correspondent would write anything critical of the US armed services. There were two factors that may have caused journalists to act accordingly: first, the US censors culled stories so vigorously, it was unlikely anything but positive news was going to slip through their network; second, but no less important, was a culture of self-editing (Tumber, 2004). In either case, one or several of the principles outlined by the ASNE were violated and, for that reason, American readers suffered.

## **War Reportage During World War II**

When the United States finally entered World War II (Knightley, 2002), many American news reporters considered abandoning their news careers and enlisting in the

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armed services. Journalists such as Ernest Hemingway saw their service as war correspondents as a way to contribute to the US war effort. When they arrived in the European theatre of operation, the Supreme Headquarters Allied Expeditionary Force (or SHAEF) was more than willing to oblige such ambitions. War correspondents were seen as ‘unofficial’ extensions of the military staff (Lewis, 1981). Journalists were granted non-commissioned officer status, were issued uniforms and military credentials, assigned desks, equipment, drivers and staff. In exchange, the war correspondent had to sign a contract assuring that all news stories would be reviewed by military censors before transmission. And, because the military controlled most of the transmission lines, a ‘censorship at the source’ culture had been perfected.

Oddly, some war correspondents saw this system as beneficial to their relationships with the military. They came to believe that because of the censorship, soldiers and commanders were able to speak more freely, on the understanding that the censors would prevent important and sensitive military information from reaching the public (Knightley, 2002). By 1944, the allied public relations apparatus had been established in Paris with a staff equipped to manage over 1,000 war correspondents and three million words of news copy generated each week. General Dwight D. Eisenhower famously noted: ‘public opinion wins war’. Eisenhower’s belief illustrates why big military operations including D-Day and the Italian campaign included, in their planning, strategies for how journalists would report these events.

Odder still was the behavior of the war correspondents in the field: it was not uncommon for these ‘noncombatant’ journalists to carry sidearms (Knightley, 2002). In some cases, field reporters took actions to aid wounded soldiers and took arms to fight the enemy.

Clearly, the lines delineating the reporter and soldier were blurred; and, as a result, much of the news copy produced by the World War II American press corps was strongly patriotic, filled with bluster and romance and devoid of any information that illustrated weakness in the Allied command and its performance in the European theatre.

This was the culture in place in spring 1945.

### **VE Day**

When Associated Press war correspondent Edward Kennedy arrived in Reims, France, on the morning of May 7, 1945, he knew he was about to witness an important piece of history. For weeks now, the remnants of Germany’s Third Reich were in fast decline. Adolf Hitler was dead; British and American forces were halted at the Elbe River as the Russian Army marched on Berlin. Rumours of surrender had circulated throughout Paris and Europe, but so far nothing conclusive had been signed.

When General Frank Allen Jr., the public relations administrator for SHAEF, contacted the Associated Press’s Paris Bureau, Kennedy, the bureau chief, decided he would be the one to go to Reims (Lewis, 1981). The short list of invited journalists included representatives of the broadcast media, US army publications and British, Canadian and Australian news agencies. It also included Kennedy’s two top rivals: James Kilgallen from the International News Agency and Boyd Lewis from the United Press.

By that point in the war with Germany, General Eisenhower had moved the Supreme Headquarters for the SHAEF to France. The Public Relations Division,

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which was managed by General Allen (Kennedy, 2012), was located inside the Scribe Hotel in Paris and most of the war correspondents attached to the SHAEF had either taken up residence inside the hotel or very nearby.

As part of the press relations matrix created during World War II (Lewis, 1981), each war correspondent was inducted into the armed services and was assigned an honorary rank and wore the appropriate uniform; when it came time to file stories, the US Army Signal Corps controlled the telegraph operations and all communications going into and out of the war theatre had to be authorized by the military. In Paris, each wire correspondent needed to reserve time with the Signal Corps, which worked on a first-come-first-served basis. These factors would weigh heavily in Kennedy's decision when the time came to publish the story.

At the heart of the controversy to come was a pledge each of the war correspondents took when they were assigned their press credentials. Historically, all World War II war correspondents had to accept oversight from SHAEF as part of their relationship. As the group of 17 war correspondents travelled to Reims to witness Germany surrender, General Allen reminded the newsmen of that pledge, telling them that the story was under embargo and that nothing could be released until SHAEF gave its authorization. At that time, however, no one knew how long that embargo was going to last (Kennedy, 2012).

According to Boyd Lewis (1981), from the United Press, General Allen said: 'This group has been chosen to represent the press of the world. The story is off the record until the respective heads of the Allied governments announce the fact to the world. I therefore pledge each and every one of you on your honor as assimilated officers of the US Army and as members of the press, not to communicate the results of this conference or even the fact of its existence, until released by the SHAEF.' Lewis remembered that Kennedy along with all the rest of the correspondents nodded in agreement.

But Kennedy (1948) had another impression: 'As the airplane winged northeastward, Allen told us that the trip concerned the impending surrender of the Germans. Then followed the "pledge on the plane", so much cited in the controversy, which followed. Allen and some of the correspondents later vested this with the solemnity of an initiation in one of the more mystically inclined fraternal orders. In reality it was a rambling talk by the general.'

### **The Surrender**

The German surrender ceremony took place inside a local schoolhouse, the École Polytechnique of Reims, at 2:41a.m., Monday, May 7, 1945 (Lewis, 1981). In a crowded classroom, with the correspondents lined along the wall and jammed in the doorway, General Alfred Josef Jodl, the new chief of staff of the German Army, entered and scrawled his name below the articles of surrender.

When he was finished, Jodl said: 'General, with this signature the German people and the German armed forces, are, for the better or worse, delivered into the victor's hands.'

The whole event took 20 minutes (Lewis, 1981).

From there, the correspondents were taken to a conference room to write their stories. Several hours went by and then General Allen entered the room and told them that the story was under embargo until 3p.m., local time, Tuesday, May 8,

1945; 36 hours after the surrender (Lewis, 1981). At the time, the entire press corps objected: they believed that the story – given its importance – would certainly leak and that one of the war correspondents in Paris would publish a piece. General Allen said that he sympathised and that he shared their concerns with General Eisenhower, but the embargo was pending official comments from President Harry Truman, Prime Minister Winston Churchill and Soviet leader Joseph Stalin.

### **The Race**

When the time came to leave, all 17 war correspondents were scheduled to fly back to Paris together. Because the US Army Signal Corps controlled the telegraph lines, Boyd Lewis from the UP knew that he had to beat the others to the Scribe Hotel and to the Single Corps office to register his story. Lewis, given some time to think, calculated that if he were the first one to board the truck leaving for the airfield in Reims, he'd be the last one to board the plane to Paris, and thus, would be the first one off the plane. He also arranged to have a car waiting for him at the Paris airfield. His planned worked perfectly. (Scully, 1995)

James Kilgallen and Edward Kennedy, meanwhile shared a ride across Paris (Lewis, 1981).

Lewis was the first to arrive and when Lewis got to the Signal Corps office, he dropped his 5,000-word story before the signal corpsman, who stamped the article first for transmission. Behind Lewis, Kilgallen and Kennedy realised the significance of the registration and raced each other into and through the hotel; Kilgallen beat Kennedy to the Scribe's revolving door and, as the two raced side-by-side up the stairs, Kilgallen 'accidentally' dropped his portable typewriter at Kennedy's feet tripping him up. Kilgallen registered second; Kennedy registered third (Scully, 1995).

This process of registration was created by the US military to control telephony and telegraphy access to the United States. As war correspondents working out of Paris, each journalist had to book time with the Signal Corps (Lewis, 1981). Since Lewis was the first to arrive in the Signal Corps office, his was the first article in line for transmission. So, all Lewis had to do was wait for the embargo to lift and the scoop was his.

### **The 36-Hour Repose**

Back inside his hotel room, Kennedy (1948) began weighing his options. News of the surrender was already leaking out. At 10a.m., that same morning, the army hosted a news conference and invited many of the war correspondents attached to the Scribe Hotel offices. Again, the army reaffirmed its 36-hour embargo and again many of the correspondents denounced the decision.

Since 1941, Kennedy had found himself cornered by the censors as he weighed the news value of at least three very important news events. In one case, the censors asked that he not publish a now-notorious story about General George Patton slapping an enlisted man during a hospital inspection. Allied commander General Dwight Eisenhower appealed directly to Kennedy not to publish the story and Kennedy complied only to see the story broken by Drew Pearson, another war correspondent (Knightley, 2002). Now, Kennedy was standing by waiting for another imaginary barrier to be lifted so he could publish. The conflict bothered him.

Inside the Associated Press newsroom, Kennedy (1948) began reading dispatches: French General Charles De Gaulle was preparing his VE Day address; and General

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Francois Sevez who signed the Instruments of Surrender for France had sent his eyewitness account to the newspaper *Figaro*. The Paris afternoon newspapers were reporting that loud speakers were being erected at 10 Downing Street in London ahead of a formal announcement from Prime Minister Winston Churchill. Finally, at 2:03p.m., Lutz Graf Schwerin von Krosigk, the leader of what remained of Germany's Third Reich, announced the unconditional surrender in a broadcast over German radio.

The news was breaking.

Kennedy attempted to reach General Allen who was too busy to take his call (Kennedy, 1948). Ever persistent, Kennedy approached Lt. Col. Richard Merrick, the chief American censor, and showed him the text of the German surrender message. Merrick refused to yield.

Stating that the Allies had effectively 'released the news' through the Germans, Kennedy challenged Merrick: 'I give you warning now that I am going to send the story,' he said (Knightley, 2002). Kennedy (1948) wrote that Merrick answered, saying: 'Do as you please.'

Kennedy then returned to his hotel room.

Odd as it seems, despite the Allies' nearly airtight security system, a communications loophole existed: at a French-run military airbase on the edge of Paris, it was possible to get brief uncensored messages into London. Boyd Lewis (1981) said correspondents used the line primarily to contact wives and girlfriends in England.

From inside the hotel, Kennedy (1948) called the Paris military switchboard on the airbase, which routed his call to London and unknowingly to the Associated Press bureau there. Once connected, Kennedy began dictating his news story. He got 300 words out before the phone went dead (Knightley, 2002). Still, it was enough for the London office to move forward: it finished writing the bulletin and sent it along to New York (Kennedy, 1948; Lewis, 1981).

### The Scoop

When the story arrived in the Associated Press headquarters in New York City, editors there stalled. They'd been burned just 10 days earlier with the same news and they wanted a moment to consider the facts (Knightley, 2002). It was 9:30a.m. in New York and the Associated Press stood poised to send the story out as a bulletin to all 2,500 clients, a list that included most major American dailies. The debate lasted just eight minutes (Kennedy, 1948); then they posted Ed Kennedy's story.

It read in part:

REIMS, France, May 7 – Germany surrendered unconditionally to the Western Allies and the Soviet Union at 2:41 A.M. French time today.

The surrender took place at a little red schoolhouse that is the headquarters of Gen. Dwight D. Eisenhower.

The surrender, which brought the war in Europe to a formal end after five years, eight months and six days of bloodshed and destruction, was signed for Germany by Col. Gen. Gustav Jodl. General Jodl is the new Chief of Staff of the German Army.

The war in Europe was over. On the morning of May 8, 1945, most newspapers across the United States published Ed Kennedy's story just below their banners. In most cases, the story included Kennedy's byline.

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But on May 7, 1945, as the story was spreading through the AP network, the Paris correspondents began receiving queries from their own news agencies. One message sent by the United Press to Boyd Lewis (1981) read:

ROXX (U.P. code for A.P.) LITTLE RED SCHOOLHOUSE REIMS  
GERMANY SURRENDERS STOP HOW QUERY.

It was apparent to Lewis and the other correspondents that the story had reached the United States and the United Press was asking Lewis how the Paris bureau had missed the story. Because of the embargo, Lewis couldn't reply to the cable, and after repeated pleas by Lewis to the army to release the story, Allied Command kept the embargo in place. Lewis (1981) was forced to wait another 24 hours, a fact that infuriated him: he wasn't the only one.

Reporters throughout the Scribe Hotel began clustering to share their knowledge over how the story was reported and subsequently released (Kennedy, 2012). The debate included questions about Kennedy's ethics and actions.

'You realize, gentlemen, that you have taken the worst beating of your lives,' said Drew Middleton, the *New York Times* correspondent (Knightley, 2002). 'The question is, what are you going to do about it?'

Within hours, a petition had been drafted and signed by 54 of the war correspondents attached to SHAEF in Paris. In it, they angrily denounced Ed Kennedy's decision to break the embargo and called Kennedy's ethics into question. That petition included language labeling Kennedy's actions as 'the most disgraceful, deliberate and unethical double cross in the history of journalism' (Knightley, 2002).

Some days later, Middleton cabled home that the SHAEF news embargo was 'the most colossal "snafu" in the history of the war. I am browned off, fed up, burned up and put out.'

### **The Fallout**

Allied Command took swift action. They immediately pulled Ed Kennedy's press credentials (Kennedy, 1948). SHAEF also suspended press credentials for the entire Associated Press throughout Europe; that suspension was eventually lifted after officials in Washington admonished the decision.

At first, the Associated Press was calling Kennedy's story 'the scoop of the century' and they championed his resourcefulness (Scully, 1995). And then, Associated Press member organisations, led aggressively by the *New York Times*, began calling for action. Within days, AP president Robert McLean issued an apology (Kennedy, 2012): 'The Associated Press profoundly regrets ... [Kennedy's filing the story] in advance of authorization by Supreme Allied Headquarters.'

Upon reading McLean's statement, Kennedy (2012) deemed it a 'serious blow' to his credibility and decided to return to the United States.

When Kennedy arrived in New York, he attempted to quit but AP executive director Kent Cooper refused to accept his resignation (Kennedy, 1948). Kennedy was asked to issue an apology but he refused; finally, Kennedy was tendered 'an attractive job offer elsewhere', but declined, believing the job was little more than 'a convenient way out' for both himself and the Associated Press (Kennedy, 1948).

For the next 18 months, the ethical questions played out in the editorial pages of several newspapers. The *Richmond Times-Dispatch* deemed Kennedy an unethical

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despot and demanded his expulsion from the industry; the *Cincinnati Times-Star* argued that SHAEF's embargo was foolish and supported Kennedy, stating his actions were rash but were in the best interest of readers.

The newspaper industry's leading trade journal, *Editor & Publisher*, also took a stand. It declared that Kennedy's explanation of his actions was insufficient and that he failed to follow one of the key tenets of journalism: he violated the confidence of a trusted source.

As for Kennedy himself, he stayed with the Associated Press until 1946. It's unclear how he was treated in the newsroom and it's unclear if he was fired or if he quit. Instead, a lump sum of \$4,986.80 mysteriously appeared in his bank account in the Summer of 1946 (Kennedy, 1948); and soon after he received a formal letter explaining that the money was part of a settlement of accounts 'in connection with your resignation.'

### The Aftermath

In the months and years that followed, it appeared to Kennedy that just about everyone had an opinion of his actions. He believed that while many of his peers in the industry were disappointed with his decision (Kennedy, 1948), many in the public felt he was justified and that they had a right to know the outcome of the brutal war as soon as it had concluded.

In 1947, General Eisenhower restored Kennedy's credentials as a war correspondent and issued a statement: 'In my own heart, after reflection and after the war, I find only room to believe that the error was committed in an excess of zeal.' Kennedy (1948) found the gesture to be symbolic and of little value since the war was over.

In August 1948, Kennedy published an article entitled 'I'd Do It Again' in *The Atlantic* magazine, where he detailed his decision to move forward with the story; he also reviewed the actions of his peers in the press corps., the Allied Command, the Associated Press and others. He never admitted any wrongdoing and never offered any apology for the work.

In the years afterward, Kennedy never came to terms with his standing in the news industry. He divorced, had a history of heavy drinking and subsequently lost his driver's license (Scully, 2007). He also moved across the country to California to work for *The Santa Barbara Press* and *The Monterey Peninsula Herald*. In November, 1963, as he walked home late one evening, he was struck and killed by an automobile. He was 58.

### Analysis

It's clear by Kennedy's story that the VE Day event ruined his career. What's not clear is who was responsible. It appears that Kennedy felt martyred by the event and his stubbornness certainly worked against him (Kennedy, 1948). But it also appears that the Associated Press turned its back on him and let him take the balance of the blame alone (Kennedy, 2012).

Kennedy spent several years pressuring the government to explain the chain of events surrounding the VE Day surrender announcement. That query ended when the government admitted that General Eisenhower had authorized German authorities to issue the surrender news over the radio network. To Kennedy (1948), that was

vindication: he had not violated their embargo because the news had already been issued publicly.

Kennedy further believed that the Allied Forces were foolish to stall the story. He determined that British and American leaders issued the embargo to allow the Soviet Union time to create its own surrender ceremony in Berlin; that event happened some days later and became a pawn in the looming Cold War political exchange. Kennedy (2012) also believed that delaying the news endangered Allied servicemen simply because it extended German resistance as these forces moved through the European theater.

One could also argue that Kennedy was merely using these excuses to justify his own vanity and that he was simply acting out to justify his competitive nature and subsequent desire to ‘scoop’ the United Press and the International News Service (Lewis, 1981).

Regardless of his motivations, Kennedy still suffered and he suffered on many levels and it could be argued that wartime journalism suffered as well.

When the SHAEF suspended press credentials for all the Associated Press correspondents serving in Europe, it sent a very potent message to the AP executives in New York about access to information (Tumber, 2004). At that point in history, the AP was still battling the United Press and, to a lesser degree, the International News Service for control of the wire-media market. Shutting down the AP in Europe certainly gave the other wire agencies control of the information in that theater and foreshadowed the possibility of the AP losing access to the Pacific Theater, which was still very active.

It’s not clear what deals, if any, were made between the AP management and the US government but the AP press access was quickly restored and an apology denouncing Kennedy’s actions was given by AP President Robert McLean.

While the government took no criminal action against Kennedy, he had certainly become a pariah among his peers in the industry. A writer at Newsweek called him ‘probably the worst-belabored reporter in the records of modern newspapering. This, after he served 20 years as a news reporter covering, in addition to everything else, the Spanish Civil war and the Allied advance through North Africa, Sicily and Italy during World War II.

Some decades later, Phillip Knightley (2002) published a book entitled ‘The First Casualty of War’, which accused the World War II war correspondents of cheer-leading. Veteran journalist Charles Lynch is quoted in Knightley’s book saying:

It’s humiliating to look back at what we wrote during the war. It was crap – and I don’t exclude the Ernie Pyles or the Alan Mooreheads. We were a propaganda arm of our governments. At the start the censors enforced that, but by the end we were our own censors. We were cheerleaders. I suppose there wasn’t an alternative at the time. It was total war. But, for God’s sake, let’s not glorify our role. It wasn’t good journalism. It wasn’t journalism at all.

And what has happened since then has certainly compounded that observation.

During the US invasion of Iraq in 2003, the embedded journalists assigned to the US combat units began parroting the kind of war reporting that occurred during World War II, which is to say, the Iraq War correspondents appeared more like cheerleaders than journalists (Lindner, 2008).

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In 1945, when the *Editor & Publisher* published its critique of Kennedy's work, it cited that he failed to follow one of the primary tenets of journalism: specifically, reporters need to treat their sources fairly. Breaking the embargo, the *E&P* argued, was tantamount to betraying SHAEF's confidence.

But there are other tenets a journalist must observe: Among them, timeliness, a respect for accuracy and a dedication to the readership. Given the enormity of the event – a virtual end to Allied combat operations in Europe – Kennedy and his peers had a responsibility to deliver that information in a timely fashion. Kennedy certainly parted company with his peers when he stepped outside the embargo and filed the news to London.

And the Associated Press does have a code of conduct dating back to 1914, which appears on its website and includes the words from Melvin Stone, the AP's former general manager:

‘I have no thought of saying The Associated Press is perfect. The frailties of human nature attach to it,’ wrote Melvin Stone. ‘[But] the thing it is striving for is a truthful, unbiased report of the world's happenings ... ethical in the highest degree.’

But one could also argue that Kennedy's action was more attuned to the tone of enterprise journalism, or news reporting that challenged military authority, created by the war correspondents working – decades later – during the Vietnam era.

During that war, the many of the top war reporters acted independently of the US military and often challenged the facts being presented by the military and its advisors. To them, journalists must battle the government's resistance, and instead respect and serve the readers' needs; the question now is whether that ethical standard is paramount above all others.

### **The Associated Press Apology**

In the opening pages of Kennedy's newly published autobiography: *Ed Kennedy's War: V-E Day, Censorship & the Associated Press*, the outgoing president of the current Associated Press issued a posthumous apology to Ed Kennedy. It reads, in part:

Perhaps in some small way we bring posthumous recognition to an American hero and embrace – too belatedly – what McLean and Cooper and the AP board could not admit. Edward Kennedy was the embodiment of the highest aspirations of the Associated Press and American journalism.

As I've written before, I believe that Kennedy's reputation was absolutely destroyed by his peers in the international press core and his host news agency, the Associated Press. And while this apology certainly vindicates his actions 75 years ago, it certainly does little to set the stage for how future war correspondents – inside and outside the AP – should conduct themselves. This, I believe, is a missed opportunity for the AP and the modern press.

### **The Bigger Picture**

It's apparent in the Kennedy case that his cruelest criticisms actually came from his peers in the news industry. Kennedy was subject to widespread ridicule for violating

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story protocols created by the US military during a conflict that was popular among US citizens. Because of that popularity, Kennedy and many of his peers in the press surrendered their objectivity and did so without regard for the long term implications of that action.

Clearly, what is lacking – even now, 75 years later – is a list of standards for journalists working under the duress of war reporting. One could argue that the standard tenets created by the Society of Professional Journalists and other, companion societies, could serve this purpose; but I disagree. The dynamic of war reporting is much different than peacetime work conducted inside the United States, Europe and elsewhere. War correspondents are subject to constant oversight by military officials; these reporters are also ‘guests’ under the care and protection of the military units to which they are assigned. This symbiotic dynamic must be a factor in the care and quality of the work created by the War Correspondent; and, as such, must be considered when drafting ethical guidelines for reporters assigned to combat units.

Absent these guidelines, chances are – with the next military action – there will be journalists who passively (or actively) support combat forces and, chances are, there will be journalists – like Ed Kennedy – who will deviate from the accepted norms created by the active press corps.

In an effort to stave off an incident like Kennedy’s, the news community should establish hard and fast standards for ethical practice by War Correspondents.

On that point, I’d like to submit that now – as Americans live within the shadows of the War on Terror – is the perfect time for a caucus of War Correspondent ‘veterans’ to meet and evaluate their field experiences; from there, this group should draft a list of ethical standards and practices, which should be presented to the Associated Press, the Society of Professional Journalists, and any other societies engaged in newsgathering practices. Acting now, will help the next generation of war correspondents perform in possible next and succeeding military engagements. Finally, a practical guide for ethics will prevent another journalist from being professionally and personally savaged as illustrated by the life of Ed Kennedy

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