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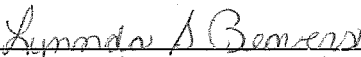
Embedding: A Brief Historical Overview and Contemporary Analysis of Journalists'
External and Internal Struggles with War Reporting

Matthew Hegarty

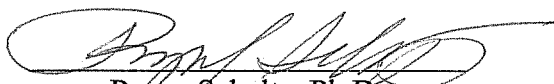
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Lynnda S. Beavers, Ph.D.
Chairman of Thesis



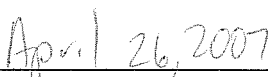
Roger Schultz, Ph.D.
Committee Member



Deborah Huff, M.B.A.
Committee Member



Judy R. Sandlin, Ph.D.
Asst. Honors Program Director



Date

Abstract

American war reporting today, specifically in the Iraq War, differs in many ways from past American military conflicts – not only in technology available to reporters, but in today’s reporting philosophies. This thesis maintains that, for war reporters, “objective coverage” is essentially impossible. To support this claim, the thesis examines war reporting historically in the Vietnam War, the Persian Gulf War, and the Iraq War. The thesis also studies the oft-tumultuous relationship between the troops and the press and analyzes the struggles of war correspondents in maintaining objectivity as they dealt with internal conflict and external censorship.

Finally, the thesis presents interviews of five reporters from differing media backgrounds – all of whom were embedded with the troops in Iraq. The interviewees’ overarching opinions were that coverage was unrestricted by the military but that true openness about the coverage was unattainable. They all agreed that their objectivity was unaffected.

Embedding: A Brief Historical Overview and Contemporary Analysis of Journalists'

External and Internal Struggles with War Reporting

Introduction

The current American military presence in Iraq is by no measure unquestioned by Americans stateside, including journalists and pundits on national media outlets who discuss the war ad nauseam. The primary way the American people assimilate news about the war is through their particular flavor of news media, which, depending on its creed, may expressly or implicitly support one agenda over another. The major way that national news networks communicate the most up-to-date information possible, whether through next-day newspaper reports, live television broadcasts or blogs from the battlefield, is through the embedded reporter. Embedding, which is the process of media outlets and military units cooperating to plant a reporter within a battalion of troops in order to report on military conflict, is relatively new as an organized entity. However, it has much basis in the history of war correspondence, mostly resulting from the Vietnam conflict and the Persian Gulf War, and it may be in part a response to history, insofar as it relates to the relationship between the media and the military and the evolving philosophies of reporting on military conflict.

Historical Overview of War Correspondence

Vietnam War

Knightley (1975) states that the Vietnam War (hereafter "War") was the first American military conflict in which war reporters started to have reservations about the morality of their profession in wartime. In addition, David Halberstam (1979) explains that reporters were not necessarily affected so much by their attempts to put together an

honest depiction of the War as they were by their editors' attempts to stomach the unfavorable reports of American exploits. Questions surfaced for the reporters, both about the amount of nationalism that was relative to fair coverage and about how reporters were personally and professionally altered by the War. Herbert J. Gans details the anecdote of a veteran war correspondent in Vietnam to strengthen this point. The reporter said this about how the War began to affect him and his coverage: "[You] get caught up, you are involved with the people you are with—the GI's—not with the people being killed or the civilians, but the GI's and you can't help that" (Gans, 1979, p. 135). Gans also mentions the "symbiotic relationships" that members of the media had early on in the War, in which reporters from Washington fed the military's take on the progress of the War and information from the War to their publications (Gans, 1979). He later suggests that this early flow of information was because Americans perceived the War as a South Vietnamese domestic conflict, which influenced the reporters' ideology at first (Gans, 1979).

However, after the horror and failure of the Tet offensive in 1968, news bureaus sent their top brass from Washington to assess the situation. Tet, a startling turn of events in the War in which North Vietnamese soldiers went on the offensive on January 31, 1968, in the urban areas of South Vietnam, wrought unforeseen bloodshed in the streets of Saigon (Karnow, 1983). As a result of the efforts of the North Vietnamese, those senior editors almost unanimously began to express serious doubt in their editorial remarks about whether the war was winnable (Gans, 1979). The most prominent of these news leaders was CBS anchor Walter Cronkite, who reversed his opinion after seeing the fallout from Tet and the hardiness of the North Vietnamese army (Graber, 1984).

Cronkite originally supported the war and even used his influence to advance the pro-war rhetoric because of his trust in public officials, but he found that he could not continue this course of action after Tet – and his changed attitude was a barometer of the climate of American public opinion (Graber, 1984). Even so, in his personal assessment of the Vietnam conflict as part of a CBS special report in late February, 1968, Cronkite displayed a trace amount of the resilience that he had once held concerning the War:

It seems now more certain than ever that the bloody experience of Vietnam is to end in a stalemate....(To) say that we are closer to victory today is to believe, in the face of the evidence, the optimists who have been wrong in the past. To suggest that we are on the edge of defeat is to yield to unreasonable pessimism. To say that we are mired in stalemate seems the only realistic, yet unsatisfactory, conclusion. (Spector, 1993, p. ix)

Because of his assessment, Cronkite may have heavily influenced the next presidential election, for it was while watching the Cronkite broadcast that then-President Lyndon Baines Johnson, already under pressure from a friend not to accept his party's nomination for the 1968 election, told his press secretary, George Christian, that if he had lost the support of Walter Cronkite, then he had lost "Mr. Average Citizen" (Graber, 1984). Indeed, that CBS broadcast was a watershed for the American media – it marked the first time in history that an American war was "called" by one of their own (Graber, 1984).

In terms of media used to report on the war, television played perhaps the most major role in communicating the Vietnam conflict to the American people – and it did not hurt that reporters had virtually free reign in Vietnam because of a permissive military policy. The impact of the glut of television coverage is amply demonstrated by

two corresponding facts, both of which have been universally corroborated. First, the Vietnam War era was the first large-scale American military venture in which enough televisions were present in America to make televised reporting a force (100 million sets at the peak of the War) (Knightley, 1975). Second, the primary way a majority of Americans, 60% to be precise, received news about the war was through their television sets (Knightley, 1975). Thus, television has been deemed the vehicle that most powerfully drove Americans' views on the War.

Much of the opinion surrounding television documentation of the Vietnam War tends to view the medium as turning the conflict into a "living-room war," a war that was not lost in the jungles of Indochina or the streets of Hanoi and Saigon but in the minds and hearts of the American people through what their eyes witnessed on a daily basis. This view partially casts the breadth of television coverage in a bad light from the perspective of the government in that allowing cameras to present a naked and graphic portrayal of the War highly influenced the affections and opinions of stateside Americans to turn against the war effort, thus significantly lessening the popularity of and support for the War. In his book, *The Powers That Be*, Pulitzer Prize-winning journalist David Halberstam (1979) lends strong support to such a characterization of television in the Vietnam years, and he states that, at first, the portrayal of the American offensive on the small screen made the debate surrounding the war and the troops seem unimportant.

However, the war was never unimportant to the journalists who covered it. As far as the pro-war versus anti-war stance, Halberstam (1979) contends that, early on in their coverage, news networks were nationalistic almost without fail, taking for granted the perceived rightness of the American cause, and anti-war voices were treated with distaste

– in short, television was “very much on the team.” Still, he says, there were two major factors that compelled the American consensus to turn against the war. First, the length of the war – because of the nature of the involvement of the North Vietnamese, who could control the pace of the war on their terms – worked against Washington bureaucrats’ idea of a “quick fix” and thus proved them to be wrong (Halberstam, 1979). Second, the fact that this particular war – one that made no distinction between civilian and soldier – was televised in all of its dragged-out brutality contributed greatly to its rejection by the American people (Halberstam, 1979).

In addition, Halberstam asserted in a March, 1964, lecture at the Columbia Graduate School of Journalism that, early on in the Vietnam War, journalists were instrumental in modifying the U.S. government’s policy concerning Vietnam (Hohenberg, 1964). He did admit, however, that he and his fellow journalists were “sympathetic” towards the U.S. government’s involvement with Saigon (Hohenberg, 1964). Even so, Halberstam maintained his opinion that the war correspondents he was working with were able to maintain an objective position on the matter because of their critical assessment of what they perceived as the undue optimism of their government with respect to the war (Hohenberg, 1964).

Another historian with an opinion similar to Halberstam is John Hohenberg. In the analysis of his chronicle of wartime correspondents, Hohenberg (1964) postulates that wartime journalists are able to exercise their positions to bring about a type of diplomacy. At the time that Hohenberg (1964) wrote his synopsis of war reporting, he said that the Vietnam conflict was yet another demonstration of this unique role of the press. Through their ability to shape news, he said, the foreign correspondents contributed greatly to and

sometimes became part of an international diplomatic corps, changing public opinion on contemporary international news (Hohenberg, 1964).

However, British historian Philip Knightley partially disputes this claim. He provides evidence to suggest that the constant barrage of war footage in the 1960s and 1970s, rather than functioning to shift public opinion on the War, only served to reinforce Americans' existing preconceptions about the War. One possible effect of this reinforcement was a deadening of the American psyche to the rawness of war. Knightley (1975) believes that because of the "small-box" nature of television coverage, the War seemed almost surreal and cinema-like to Americans, and that even the enduring opinion of the War has come to entail mostly combat footage that does not truly express the full scope of the War.

In analyzing the effects of the televised broadcasting of the Vietnam War on the American populace, American psychologist Fredric Wertham said in 1967 that television "had the effect of conditioning its audience to accept war" (Knightley, 1975, p. 411). In addition, a *Newsweek* survey five years later arrived at nearly the same conclusion. "The only way we can possibly tolerate it is by turning off a part of ourselves instead of the television set," *Newsweek* reported (Knightley, 1975, pp. 411-12). Knightley (1975) also cites statistics on the number of correspondents in Vietnam to show two other effects that the Tet offensive – specifically, the My Lai massacre on March 16, 1968 – had on the American media's perception of the war: 1) a general, if resigned, agreement that the U.S. had all but lost the War and 2) the fact that increasingly declining space was given to coverage of the War after My Lai, a brutal incident in which U.S. soldiers slaughtered more than 300 peasants in a coastal Vietnamese province (Karnow, 1983).

To complicate matters, some war correspondents in the Vietnam conflict were subjected to duties that were well outside the scope of their resumes. In the bestselling chronicle *We Were Soldiers Once ... and Young*, United Press International reporter Joe Galloway recounts an incident that blurred the lines between combatant and observer (Moore, 1993). Galloway says that, during the beginning stages of the Battle of Ia Drang in November, 1965, Major Charles Beckwith, the commanding officer of the Plei Me Special Forces Camp, handed him an M-16 rifle after the fight concluded (Moore, 1993). Galloway protested that, per the Geneva convention, he had to be considered a civilian and a noncombatant, to which Beckwith responded, “No such thing in these mountains, boy. Take the rifle” (Moore, 1993, p. 36).

The Vietnam War is identified as the first American overseas military venture in which the U.S. government placed virtually no restrictions on the amount of information to which it allowed the American media access. Indeed, the virtually uncensored characteristic of the Vietnam War gave the media all they needed to report on it in all of its ghastly detail, night after night. Daniel Hallin, a political science and communications professor at the University of California at Berkeley, points out the stark contrast between the media’s role in the Vietnam era and its role in earlier historical periods. Hallin (1986) says that, in previous wars, the American press had functioned essentially as a “fourth branch of government,” a public relations mouthpiece for the political establishment of the time. As part of this duty, the press gave up its right to criticize the government’s wartime policy; in addition, the press had to allow government to shape the news according to its foreign policy dictates (Hallin, 1986).

Despite this entanglement with the affairs of its government, the members of the American press slowly began to extricate themselves from the clutches of government via the unrestricted current of war news (Hallin, 1986). Because the circumstances surrounding the media/military relationship in the War differed significantly from the circumstances in World War II, the previous censorship barrier that existed for reporters was basically lifted. The open flow of news was an aspect of the war that Hallin (1986) argues could not be controlled by the military because, for the U.S. government, censoring the reporters in Vietnam would have been politically unreasonable because American military units were functioning as visitors in South Vietnam.

Another area that the shift in military censorship in Vietnam affected, Hallin contends, was the tone of news stories and the American public's perception of those stories. To offer an illustration of this drastic change, Hallin explains, one should examine the facts of the differing perspectives of World War II stories and Vietnam dispatches. World War II stories were crafted in such a way as to seem to be speaking from the individual experiences of the journalists – the sources for those journalists, if they were mentioned at all, were buried somewhere in the stories, giving the appearance of personal testimonies (Hallin, 1986). Ostensibly, this characteristic of the dispatches allowed the reader to feel more personally involved, and the shared meaning that resulted made the reader more trusting of the journalist and the cause of the war. On the other hand, the unrestrained nature of the news from Vietnam made the reporter look more detached from his or her story and the “war effort” (Hallin, 1986). Hallin (1986) says that the Vietnam stories were “peppered with attributions” that were sometimes conflicting,

but these attributions were seasonings that caused the story to become less pleasant to the reader, thus also creating a sense of detachment inside the reader.

Vietnam, then, was an open war, in which the American military exercised little or no restraints on the amount of information to which it allowed reporters access. As an example of this action, consider the experience of Lieutenant General Harold G. Moore, also of *We Were Soldiers* fame. Moore (1993) describes his policy with war correspondents thus in his memoir: “I welcomed visiting reporters to my battalion and, later, to my brigade. I told them they could go anywhere they wanted with my troopers, with only two restrictions: Don’t put out any information that will endanger us, and don’t interfere with operations. I never had cause to regret that openness” (p. 157). This strategy, rather than bring positive benefits to America’s armed forces by highlighting their liberality in sharing details and data with reporters, instead backfired on them by exposing the unethical nature of some of the soldiers who were fighting and by showing the drawn-out nature of the war. Military commanders recognized only slowly the havoc they were wreaking on their campaigns by letting the “uncontrolled” media have an essentially unrestricted flow of information. Such a policy would not be too soon repeated in the next major American military endeavor – the Persian Gulf War in 1990 and 1991.

Persian Gulf War

If the Vietnam War was in any way open to reporters, then the Gulf War was closed and padlocked and the key melted down. It is true that the Gulf War was another watershed for the American press in that it was the first foreign American military endeavor to be broadcast in real time (Graber, 2000). In addition, the round-the-clock

coverage by major news networks created what members of the press termed the “CNN effect,” which was the propensity of the American populace to remain glued to their television sets for hours so that they would not miss the next development in the Gulf War (Graber, 2000). However, the censorship that the American media had to accept in order to reach that momentous point certainly, for them, soured the sweet taste of history in the making. In his revealing book, *Second Front: Censorship and Propaganda in the 1991 Gulf War*, Harper’s Magazine publisher John MacArthur (2004) implies that the political establishment learned its lessons from Vietnam. He also says that, even as the Gulf War began in August, 1990, then-President George H. W. Bush had no intention of letting American news networks have the free reign in Kuwait that they did in Vietnam (MacArthur, 2004). Robert Wiener (2002), a reporter for CNN during the Gulf War, substantiates this policy shift from the reporter’s perspective by expressing bewilderment at the censorship to which his network was subject. MacArthur (2004) recounts the history of the governmental memo entitled “Annex Foxtrot” that shaped the limitations on the coverage of the War. What exactly was Foxtrot’s main rule of reporter/troop relations? “News media representatives will be escorted at all times. Repeat, at all times” (MacArthur, 2004, p. 7).

Despite these restrictions, the American government did give limited accessibility to the press. One major tool that Bush’s administration used to placate members of the media was the National Media Pool established by the U.S. Department of Defense, which allowed its members to file even mundane stories (MacArthur, 2004). The DOD Pool perhaps lulled the journalists figuratively to sleep in that they were happy to file stories and carry out other tasks common to their reporting while remaining totally

unaware of their restricted freedom, thus creating a false impression of the way things were. Long after the War was over, MacArthur (2004) recounts, the *New York Times* remarked that the Gulf War was “this century’s first major conflict where the policy was to confine reporters to escorted pools that sharply curtailed when and how they could talk to the troops” (p. 7).

MacArthur and others list the hindrances to good reporting during the Gulf War era: military censorship, as evidenced by the 1,600 journalists who had to sit on their hands in Saudi Arabia; the briefness of the conflict; and the fact that it was mostly an air campaign (MacArthur, 2004; Graber, 2000). Another obstacle was the “randomness” that would typify any superior war correspondence, which was a characterization that was notably absent from the reporting of the Gulf War because of the planned nature of the information (MacArthur, 2004). An additional obstacle, according to MacArthur (2004), was whether the Gulf War could even be properly termed a war. He raises this question by calling into question the characterization of the conflict as a “war” because the term “war” presumes two sides (the Iraqis put up almost no resistance to the coalition forces), and he compares the conflict to a massacre (MacArthur, 2004).

Another factor MacArthur (2004) mentions that contributed to the climate of censorship were the public affairs officers (PAOs), who were those military personnel whose sole job was to keep a tight lid on military information, both from getting to the journalists and from slipping out of the soldiers’ mouths. Other serious censorship-related roadblocks to getting the full story about the Gulf War, at least from the reporters’ perspective, included the following: the barring of the press from Dover Air Force Base in Dover, DE, which is the drop-off point for the flag-draped coffins of American soldiers

who make the ultimate sacrifice; and the arresting of most of the over-eager reporters who donned combat clothes to sneak in with the troops, only to be discovered and incarcerated for up to 12 hours (Graber, 2000).

Because of these difficulties, the Gulf War was easier for the President and his administration to shape – and, for some odd reason, American media figureheads and outlets almost unilaterally showed a lack of concern for the fact that their freedom of the press was being usurped by the government (MacArthur, 2004). Some, such as Dan Rather of CBS and Katharine Graham of the *Washington Post*, did speak out disapprovingly, almost angrily at the limitations (though those instances were after the fact), but this was far from the norm (MacArthur, 2004). Even so, MacArthur (2004) does list some notable exceptions to the rule of muzzled reporters, such as CBS reporter Bob Simon and his staff, who were able to obtain the first “scoop” of the war by dressing in fatigues and leaving their pool to film a burning Saudi oil refinery, and British correspondent Robert Fisk, who went unescorted into an Iraqi town in his dogged pursuit of a good story.

After the Gulf War, however, all four executives of the major news networks of the time (excluding FOX) and executives from 13 other news organizations presented a signed report of their grievances over the Bush administration’s censorship to then-Secretary of Defense Richard Cheney (Graber, 2000). In the report, the executives decried the restrictions on military information and essentially called them an affront to the free press of a democracy (MacArthur, 2004). In addition, the executives criticized the government for shaping the news to fit its agenda by controlling information that the executives believed was their legitimate right to print and broadcast restriction-free

(MacArthur, 2004). Furthermore, the executives denounced the unnecessary delays in getting copy sent back to their headquarters, in which military officers would take extra time with articles to ensure that stories were properly sanitized of undesirable information (MacArthur, 2004). Finally, media executives decried the unwanted use of military escorts for reporter pools, which were described by one correspondent during the war as “a group of senior citizens on a conducted tour” (MacArthur, 2004, pp. 309, 311).

Iraq War

If the Gulf War was a reaction of the U.S. government to its liberality in Vietnam, then the embedded reporters program in Iraq was, in part, the re-reaction of the press. Bill Katovsky (2003), in his chronicle of war correspondents in Iraq, *Embedded: the Media at War in Iraq*, reminds his readers that the notion of embedding, which he calls a “slick new public-relations concept,” was borrowed from earlier American wars (p. xi). By way of reminder, embedding is a term used to refer to Iraq War reporters who, after enduring a special “boot camp” that would prepare them for the rigors of the battlefield, were attached to combat units, having signed agreements not to publish certain information, such as tactical facts or locations of troop movements. To inaugurate the PR campaign, the Pentagon issued 2,700 media credentials at the start of what the U.S. Central Command’s Director of Strategic Communications, Jim Wilkerson, observed would be the “most covered war in history” (Katovsky, 2003, p. xi). One possible ground for this assessment of the upcoming war coverage was the ubiquitous nature of technology, especially technology that would permit war to be broadcast in real time with minimal restrictions. Whatever the reason, it was apparent that the media outlets and the military,

which were indeed strange bedfellows, had started a new chapter in their tumultuous relationship.

Journalists began dividing themselves into ideological camps based on their journalistic philosophy – the embedded reporter and the independent, which functioned much like the “unilateral” of the Gulf War days (Katovsky, 2003). Embedded journalists had vastly more access to the troops and the front lines, as Katovsky (2003) details, and they were protected from more harm than they would have been if they were freelancing. However, their points of view were severely restricted to the area of the units with which they happened to be traveling. Another potential drawback to being embedded was a possible loss of impartiality because of their close proximity to the troops. However, CBS News correspondent Bob Schieffer strongly disagrees with this contention. In fact, he compared the embedded reporters to regular beat reporters who, no matter what kind of a story they had written, would have to go back to the same people day after day – in the Iraq journalists’ case, the troops (Sylvester, 2005).

Conversely, the independent (hereafter “unilateral”) journalist, who was not tied down to any one military unit, was able to get a wider range of perspectives and sources but could not get close to combat (Katovsky, 2004). For the journalist, this represented a stark moral – and professional – dilemma: is it ethical to trade objectivity for information? Various journalists addressed this internal conflict in different ways. For example, CNN Baghdad Bureau Chief Jane Arraf addressed her own soul-searching in the midst of the Iraq War (Katovsky, 2004). She said that people who complained that she had to limit herself in a situation where she decided not to report on specific citizens in Iraq who had been tortured “did not understand the circumstances of reporting under a

totalitarian regime” (Katovsky, 2004, p. 64). On the other hand, Ed Timms, a staff writer for the Washington Bureau of the *Dallas Morning News*, reported that he faced no serious ethical conundrums (Sylvester, 2005). Timms, who went through an embedding boot camp of sorts before his travels in Iraq, said that the work was difficult at times but said that his actual reporting responsibilities were nevertheless not wearisome in the least, provided he take into account some commonsense rules such as not showing lights when the enemy was close by or identifying his unit’s specific location (Sylvester, 2005).

Embedded journalists in Iraq are probably the most privileged group of wartime correspondents ever to be in existence – not only do they get special training beforehand, the nature of today’s technology is such that so many forms of contemporary media (blogs, podcasts, online streaming video, webcams, etc.) can be at the fingertips of the journalists who need them. Joseph Galloway, the famed Vietnam-era correspondent who now works for Knight Ridder Newspapers, said that when Knight Ridder sent out 50 reporters (both unilateral and embedded, along with one “combat sketch artist”) to Iraq, every single one of them traveled with a laptop and a satellite telephone in order to send their work back to the States for editors to process and categorize the information (Sylvester, 2005).

Since its inception at the start of the war in Iraq, the embed program has received mixed responses from those involved. Lt. Col. Oliver North’s testimony is witness to this fact. North (2003) praises the reporters in his writings for seeming to provide a “straightforward account” of the war, and he mentions some instances of American members of the media appearing to be “genuinely surprised” at the humanitarian efforts of the troops surrounding them. On the other hand, North (2003) is also critical of the

American war correspondents in part for what he perceives as distorted or negative reporting. In contrast, Gen. Tommy Franks finds mostly positive things to say about the embedded reporters in his book, *American Soldier*. Franks (2004) writes, “And as the progress unfolded, it became clear that the traditional distrust and animosity between the military and the media was breaking down.... There was a certain Ernie Pyle spirit developing...” (Franks, 2004, p. 412). He highlights one of the main advantages of the new system, in that journalists could now have direct access to the front lines of battle, but he also shows instances in which journalists could not exercise complete freedom as they desired (operations under cover of night, etc.) (Franks, 2004).

Historical Conclusions

In the final analysis of the embedding process in Iraq, the witnesses of past wars stand as markers by which that process will inevitably be measured. Especially since the turmoil occurred in Vietnam, American military ventures on foreign soil have been occasions for the constant tug-of-war match between the military leaders and the press to surface. This clash has largely remained external to the reporter in that the conflict is interpersonal, such as instances when representatives of the media and of the military are at odds, arguing about how a story should be covered. However, the peculiar, soul-searching nature of the embedding process and the character of its alternative have magnified another dimension of the old struggle – tension that is internal to the reporter. As previously stated, the ethical decision that today’s war correspondents must make as to which to emphasize more, maintaining objectivity or getting the scoop on the front lines, can be difficult at times. Not only do the journalists in question have legitimate concerns for their safety, and sometimes for their lives, but they must also bear the

burden of choosing the most ethically acceptable way of representing themselves and the stories they uncover to the American public.

If the journalist in Iraq chooses the path of the unilateralist and the freelancer, then he or she will most likely enjoy the freedom to move around the country – within reason – and the opportunity to develop stories on the war's side issues, such as the plight of Iraqi civilians caught in the crossfire, the development of or lack of infrastructure since President Bush declared major combat operations over in May, 2001, or the inner workings of Iraq's new system of government. On the other hand, if the Iraq war reporter decides that the thrills and dangers of combat are too enticing to pass up and he or she becomes embedded within a battalion, that reporter must then prepare for the worst of conditions. The embedded correspondent eats, drinks, sleeps and breathes war right along with the troops. This situation, though it gives access to the front lines, the casualties and the down-and-dirty aspect of warfare, does not lend itself to objectivity easily. Rather, attachment to and empathy with the troops of the embedded reporter's assigned battalion, along with a sense of commonality, can become the emotional consequences for that reporter – consequences that, for journalists today who value their objectivity above all else, may not be worth the risk.

Contemporary Analysis

Methodology

Development of Subject Criteria

As the thesis began to be formulated and ideas for its examination of the current embed process, it became apparent that it would be necessary to contact those who had personal experience with the topic, namely American reporters who had been embedded

with coalition forces. The primary search criteria that were developed for data collection included: 1) the reporters must be American, 2) they must have been embedded with the troops fighting in the Iraq War, and 3) they must have spent at least a week in their embedded state with the military. The author decided after a conference with Dr. Cecil Kramer, then the chair of the Liberty University Department of Communication Studies, to confine the number of subjects he would interview to five. Distinctions were not made with respect to type of medium, branch of service, or demographic characteristics. To locate interview subjects, the author did a cursory Google search using the keywords “embed” and “reporter.” The process by which the scope of the thesis’ interview subjects was consciously narrowed came in locating reporters who worked for papers in close proximity to Liberty University. In addition, contact was attempted with reporters that were from the author’s hometown metropolitan area of Denver, Colorado. Even though the above sub-criteria were not technically stated in the thesis proposal, the sample that was able to be collected is still representative of embedded reporters as a whole, based on the commonalities in several points of the interviewees’ experiences.

Development of Interview Criteria

The primary objective of the interviewing was to ascertain the possible degree of objectivity in war reporting in Iraq. The author came into the research with no preconceived notions except one: that objectivity in time of war, in the broadest sense of the term, is impossible, since each reporter would bring a unique set of experiences and opinions to any given situation. This question of objectivity was analyzed through a number of different subjects for the questions, including: proximity to and friendships developed with the troops, emotions or personal experiences that may have played a part

in the reporter's "spin" on a particular story, and whether military officials played a part in denying information to the reporter. The complete list of interview questions can be found in Appendix A of this thesis.

Contacting the Subjects

After researching the names of several reporters, the author settled upon six that he would attempt to contact, and he added an extra just in case one of the other five was unavailable or unwilling to comment. The reporters that were contacted were, in order of those interviewed: Steffan Tubbs of NewsRadio 850 KOA, a Clear Channel station based in Denver (Tubbs was actually the inspiration for this project); Charlie Brennan of the *Rocky Mountain News*, a daily newspaper that is also based in Denver; Mark Johnson of the *Charlotte Observer*, a daily paper in the Charlotte, NC, metropolitan area; Jeremy Redmon of the *Atlanta Journal-Constitution*, a daily based in Atlanta, GA; and Louis Hansen, a reporter for *The Virginian-Pilot*, a daily newspaper that services the Hampton Roads area of Virginia. The extra reporter the author contacted, whom he ended up not interviewing, was Bruce Finley of the Denver-based newspaper, *The Denver Post*. Through telephone calls and e-mails, each of the five reporters was eventually contacted and subjected to a telephone interview. Each interview was approximately 18 minutes in length.

Data Collection

Data collection was performed through the interviews that were conducted with the reporters who had previously been embedded. All five interviews were conducted on an Internet Protocol office phone, utilizing the phone's built-in speakerphone and a micro-cassette recorder to tape the interviews. Following each interview, the author typed

up a complete transcript of that interview. The transcripts can be found in Appendix B of this thesis. The transcripts were then used in analyzing the experiences, thoughts, feelings and opinions of the reporters who were interviewed.

Results

General Questions

Four of the questions pertained to general statements about the tenure of the embedded reporters, such as the length of their stays and the units with which they were embedded. Three out of the five reporters stayed with the troops for approximately two-and-a-half weeks, while one stayed for two months and another stayed for a combined total of five months. The units they stayed with were also diverse and included the 4th Infantry Division, the Army Corps of Engineers, the 82nd Airborne Division, the 276th Engineer Battalion, the 48th Brigade Combat Team, two military ships (the *U.S.S. Teddy Roosevelt* and the *U.S.S. San Jacinto*) and various military police units and systems support teams. In addition, the reporters gave varied accounts of their “welcome to Iraq” experiences, which for all of them was an encounter early on in their reporting experience when they finally realized that they were “over there,” to use World War II terminology. These experiences included the reporters themselves being involved in combat landings and Scud missile drills, and one experience included viewing of a pile of battle-damaged vehicles. Finally, three out of the five reporters surveyed came into some sort of contact with unilateral journalists. However, one reporter – Jeremy Redmon – defined that term in a different way than it has been used in this thesis, as he considered reporters who hopped between attachments to military units to be somewhat unilateral instead of the

“strictly unattached” criterion that was specified (J. Redmon, personal communication, February 23, 2007).

Objectivity Questions

Regarding disallowance of printing of information by military. When the journalists were asked if the military ever disallowed them from printing information, four out of the five gave a negative response. However, all four qualified their response with a common theme – either some sort of “voluntary censorship” or abiding by “commonsense rules” that they would have adhered to even if the troops were not present. These included not revealing items such as troop movements or locations of armaments, essentially “operational information.” Later on in the interviews, some reporters agreed that there was an accompanying undercurrent of self-preservation that made it easy to abide by the rules the military laid forth in that the reporters knew that if they reported on items such as troop advances, weapons placements, and base locations, they would endanger their own lives as well as the soldiers they were covering. By the reporters’ own assessments, this restriction seemed not to affect their coverage. The one reporter who gave a positive response to the question of disallowance of printing by the military was Hansen, who affirmed that he had actually been stripped of his reporting privileges because of some information he had printed about a battle-damaged Humvee (L. Hansen, personal communication, February 22, 2007). Therefore, this incident was not so much an issue of disallowance as one of discipline by the military.

Regarding apprehension over bodily harm. Without exception, all five journalists gave detailed anecdotes of times they were concerned for their safety on the battlefield. Redmon gave a particularly striking story as he recounted how a suicide bomber had

walked into a military mess tent and detonated himself, killing more than a dozen people and wounding close to 70 (Redmon was about 50 meters away from the blast and was unharmed). Other stories the journalists gave included narrow escapes from improvised exploding devices (IEDs), survivals of several mortar attacks, and a near miss from a rocket-propelled grenade (RPG).

Regarding concerns about maintaining professionalism. Four out of the five journalists said that they did not believe that their personal professionalism was compromised. The one journalist who expressed some concern about maintaining a professional atmosphere was Brennan, who recounted an incident in which military personnel had instructed him that he was a non-combatant and could therefore not carry firearms (C. Brennan, personal communication, February 16, 2007). However, in a situation after that briefing in which there was imminent danger, a few soldiers offered Brennan a sidearm for protection. He refused, but the soldiers kept pressing the issue for a while, insisting that he take the gun, before they decided to drop it. Johnson said he would have opted for self-preservation in such a situation (M. Johnson, personal communication, February 16, 2007). Redmon echoed this sentiment. However, Tubbs did not address professionalism quite in the same manner (S. Tubbs, personal communication, February 9, 2007). Hansen concurred with Tubbs' appraisal of the topic, in that both men gave insight into how they recognized the importance of maintaining ties with their subjects but also how their professional standards were not compromised.

Regarding deliberately unpublished information. All five journalists professed not to have had the problem of deliberately not filing copy about information because of their own self-censorship – Johnson overtly, but the other four in the context of the

“commonsense rules” that were mentioned in the section on military disallowance of material to be submitted for publication. The journalists seemed to accept their agreement with the military as part of the natural order of things as they reported on the battlefield.

Regarding a fostering of fraternity between the reporters and the troops. All five reporters said that they did develop some sort of sense of commonality with the troops, whether it was in the context of an actual friendship, as was the case with Tubbs, or whether the embed unit was from the reporter’s hometown, as was the case with Hansen. The reporters considered the cultivating of such a bond in such circumstances to be only natural.

Regarding journalistic objectivity that was affected by proximity to military. All five reporters said that their journalistic objectivity was unaffected by their closeness to and relationships with military units. Johnson said that, in his estimation, there was no such thing as being truly objective. He said that each person who could try to write such stories would have his or her own set of personal biases and experiences that could possibly affect his or her coverage. Redmon said that the objective scope of his coverage was affected somewhat, if only because he was somewhat at the mercy of the military for finding out certain types of information. He cited an example of trying to talk with an Iraqi citizen while using an American soldier as a translator – Redmon was concerned that he was possibly hindered by both the mere presence of the armed military officer and the reality that his translator, due to his military bias, could possibly filter the Iraqi’s Arabic through his personal concern for his fellow troops.

Regarding whether emotions or personal experience figured into coverage. To greater or lesser degrees, four out of the five reporters confirmed that some stories they

had written were at times driven by their emotions. Brennan expressed a certain amount of dissatisfaction with his copy at times, saying it was a little too “hysterical” for his taste and adding that he thought that more experience would have assisted him in that area. Hansen, on the other hand, said that he thought the best stories are those into which emotion is drawn while paying attention to moving moments. “You can be objective and passionate at the same time,” he said. Johnson was the only one who replied to this question in the negative, saying that his personal emotions did not affect his coverage. However, he did write an article that came somewhat from his personal experience on how rare it was to find a soldier who was “eager for the fight,” but this appeared to be unrelated to the scope of the question.

Conclusions from Interviews

The interviews both confirmed and disconfirmed the author’s original assumption about objectivity, in that it is impossible in the broadest sense of the term. That assumption was confirmed in statements from Johnson, who believed that there was no such thing as being truly objective but that reporters – including himself – come to stories “with our own personal experiences, our own personal biases.” The assumption was disconfirmed by the rest of the interviewees, who believed that their objectivity was not hindered by any consideration, whether it be their closeness or camaraderie with soldiers or their consensual pre-embed agreement with military officials.

The author was surprised to discover that the information the journalists “withheld” was due in part to their instinct for self-preservation, in addition to concerns about the withdrawal of any further cooperation from the military they might have received. However, some important insights were gained into the opinions of reporters on

their coverage and the importance of their work. Indeed, on the whole, the reporters believed that not only had the embed process been a success in covering the Iraq War from the overall perspective of the media, but it was also extremely influential in developing them as journalists and as people.

If this topic were to be researched further, additional questions would need to be added about the tradeoffs between embedding with a military unit and roaming Iraq unattached. In addition, the focus would not only be on safety issues but also on the tradeoffs in completeness of coverage that reporters would have to weigh. Those tradeoffs were probably the most significant other commonality among the interviewees' relative satisfaction with their work; in some ways, they felt hindered by their attachment to the military in that it was difficult for them to widen the scope of their stories beyond military encounters. It would be fascinating to gain insight from reporters about their consideration of their options as members of the media, and if they thought that their coverage was in any way incomplete because of the limitations inherent in traveling with the troops.

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Appendix A

Embed Questionnaire

How long was your stay?

What unit were you embedded with?

What was your “welcome to Iraq” moment?

Did you interact with any unilateral journalists? Describe that experience.

Did military officials ever disallow you from printing information?

Were you ever concerned for your safety?

Did you ever have any concerns about maintaining professionalism?

Did you ever deliberately hold back information due to concerns about your closeness with the troops?

Did you ever get a sense of commonality or brotherhood with the troops during your stay?

In what way was your objectivity affected by your proximity to military units, if at all?

Did your own emotions/experiences ever figure into how you covered a particular story?

Appendix B

Transcribed Interviews

Interview 1: Steffan Tubbs, NewsRadio 850 KOA

MH: I did a little bit of background research on you, but not much, so my first couple questions are going to concern the stay itself, and then I'm going to get into a little bit of your feelings, emotions, opinions as it were, because part of my research project is to discover the objectivity of embedded reporters because of their proximity to the troops. So that's going to be part of my interview as well. But first question, how long was your stay?

ST: My stay was two-and-a-half weeks.

MH: Approximately over what time period was that – what month, year, that sort of thing?

ST: It was from the beginning of March to about mid-March of last year – 2006.

MH: What unit were you embedded with?

ST: I was mostly embedded with members of the 4th I.D. (Infantry Division, Army) out of Fort Hood, Texas, but would also patrol with military police units, Army Corps of Engineer units – it just would depend on daily activities, but the majority of the time with the 4th I.D.

MH: Sorry for my silence. I'm furiously writing as well so I can have a little bit of backup.

ST: That's all right.

MH: What was your "welcome to Iraq" moment?

ST: (laughs) The "welcome to Iraq" moment for me was me combat-landing into Sadaam – formerly Sadaam International Airport – flying on a military transport. I can't remember the exact – it was a C – it wasn't a C-130; that was what we took out. I think it was a – gosh, it was a C-17, I can't remember, but it was a major military transport plane that we took from Kuwait to Iraq. And that was my absolute "welcome to Baghdad," you're flying in and you're doing combat maneuvers to avoid possible surface-to-air missiles or whatever. So that was when I think I officially realized where I was.

MH: Did it – how long did it take to sink in that you were "here"? I mean, I'm sure that you as a radio personality, a reporter, you're probably used to going to a lot of places and seeing a lot of new things – but was there anything surreal about that moment as you guys touched down and walked into the airport?

ST: My entire two-and-a-half weeks was one collective surreal moment. It was eye opening, it was scary, it was – I think at some point, you know, averting bodily injury and – who knows? – death, I don't know, but it was all surreal. Absolutely – hard to relate to what's going on in Iraq when you're sitting in a newsroom in the United States, compared to actually being there and hearing the gunfire, smelling the dust storms, you know, seeing the remains of roadside bombs and that kind of thing. It all was almost at times out-of-body, like “this isn't happening to me.”

MH: Did you ever interact with any unilateral journalists?

ST: Several times. I had a chance at one point – I remember distinctly talking with Iraqi journalists. And you know, when you say “Iraqi journalists,” well, you know under Sadaam's regime, these were reporters that certainly had none of the protections of freedom of the press that we do here in the United States. And to talk with them and to hear their perspectives on how it used to be compared to what they could write now, at that time last year, was fascinating. Some of the just factual reporting that these Iraqi journalists were going through and then actually being able to publish – had they written the same thing or an editor allowed them to have published what their words were, you know, 20 years earlier, they would have probably been beheaded at noon in a town square area. So talking with the Iraqi journalists really stuck out, but you know, when you're embedded and you're staying around, at least in the “green zone,” you're running into reporters from around the world, whether it be from Australia, Britain, Germany – obviously of global interest, and you get the global coverage.

MH: Can you define “green zone” for the uninitiated?

ST: The green zone is an area where a lot of the diplomatic offices are. The former Republican Palace, where Sadaam – it was basically considered the Iraqi White House, if you will. Inside the green zone, you've got hospitals, you've got a lot of, again, the diplomatic operation going on, state department, Army Corps of Engineers. The green zone is often considered the safe zone, which is ridiculous, because you're a mortar shell away from being killed, even in the green zone. But this is a highly fortified, highly secured area where a lot of the high-ranking officials would be and a lot of important things would be going on “in theater,” so to speak. And on the outside of the green zone, obviously, is what they consider the “red zone,” and that is basically – the green zone is basically a small fingernail of what is greater Baghdad, and that is, you know, considered completely the red zone.

MH: Okay – now some questions about your reportage. Did military officials ever disallow you from printing information?

ST: No. ... Short answer, no. We were told, you know, the parameters were, you cannot give any location where you are – that kind of thing, but you know, there was never censorship as far as, “Here's what I'm going to write,” or, “Here's what I plan to broadcast,” and somebody hearing that and saying, “No, you cannot say this.” To me, the

editorship was all common sense. And really, if there was any censorship, it never impacted my message that I was getting back out in my reports. I mean, you know, who cares if you're not allowed to name the specific intersection where you're reporting from. I mean, nobody in the United States cares anyway. So I found the journalistic freedom to be quite open, and it was definitely refreshing.

MH: You mentioned talking tongue-in-cheek about the green zone. Were you ever concerned for your safety over there?

ST: Without question. Every single day, almost every single minute, the reason being – and this is my big line that I came back with, and I've told so many people about – in Iraq, at any given time, you're one well-placed mortar shell away from death, no matter where you are, no matter if you're in the green zone, red zone, walking on a country road, driving down a highway, at a marketplace. You know, it's really, especially with all the killings we've seen in the last year, you know – in a sense, you're almost lucky if you make it through, especially if you're a journalist and you're trying to get to areas where the danger's at its apex, or if you're traveling with the military and, you know, you're part of an embed program, obviously United States coalition force is their target. I mean, I can go into detail specifically if you want me to do so, you know, the most scary time for me in a unit that I was with if you want, but I don't know how much detail you want me to give you.

MH: Yeah, um, just one or two anecdotes.

ST: One anecdote. Driving in a Humvee convoy along a canal where there had been several Humvees, U.S. Humvees blown up the previous week. And we drove over a small bridge over a canal, checking out a bombed-out oil pipeline about five miles away. Drove over that, and when we came back, we were stopped going over the same bridge because the bridge that we'd driven over was wired with explosives, and there was a device – wires were sticking out of it – and it had been buried. And we avoided it, driving over it, but they brought out the bomb squad. They dug it up, they couldn't determine what it was, and they blew it up, right there in front of us. But, you know, you go, "But for the grace of God, that could have been me." Now would it have killed me? Would it have hurt me? Would it have hurt anybody else? Who knows? But the fact that we'd just driven over that not two hours earlier really makes you go, "Wow, you know, this is not anything but reality."

MH: Wow. That's incredible. Did you ever have any concerns about maintaining professionalism?

ST: No. I'm a professional. I was respected, you know. I don't know if you're going to get into how I was treated by the military – members of the military themselves, but you know, once you broke the ice and you realized, they realized that I wasn't out to try and backstab 'em or whatever, I just wanted to experience and be the eyes and ears of my audience and just give them exactly what I was seeing. I was welcomed. I developed friendships with some of the guys, and I was never – not in any way, no.

MH: Did you ever deliberately hold back information due to concerns about your closeness with the troops?

ST: Only the locations, but again, I kind of got into that. It was just kind of understood that you would not disclose the location. Other than that, no.

MH: Did you ever get a sense of commonality or brotherhood with the troops during your stay?

ST: Great question. Absolutely. You know – not only among themselves, but let's face it – as a journalist and you're embedded, you're not armed. And you're the only person sometimes within, you know, who knows how far, that's unarmed. You definitely have a respect and almost a sense of needing protection by members of the military that you're embedded with. Now, does this create a conflict of interest? I think absolutely not. If you're in a war zone, and the guy next to you has military training and he's also got an M-16 around his shoulder, I think you feel a hell of a lot better about being out there and trying to cover what you're covering with that kind of protection. What I experienced – flat out a bunch of good guys, people that I would want to have by me if I were in uniform and people that I wouldn't mind having a beer with out of that situation.

MH: Do you think that your objectivity was in any way affected by your proximity to military units?

ST: Objectivity, no – again, realizing that, you know, these people are in a sense keeping you safe. Some would say maybe you're slanted a little bit because your safety's in their hands – but objectivity, absolutely not. I reported, when I was there, the good, the bad and the extreme ugly, because ugly over there is very ugly. But again, I was as objective as I could possibly be, which is my goal on any story, whether it's in Iraq or here in Denver or wherever, and just to present the facts. And I think I did a solid job of that.

MH: Last question. Did your own emotions or experiences ever figure into how you covered a particular story?

ST: Not while I was embedded, but when I returned – and I'll give you another small anecdote. I became, I would say, as good of friends as you could become with somebody in two or three days. I met a Colorado soldier who was – I was embedded with his unit, and had corresponded with him after I returned from Iraq, and we had done a very successful plan to get soccer balls to kids in Iraq. And this Army captain was killed by an IED, that I had befriended. He was killed five weeks after I came back, and it was extremely emotional for me. And I don't know how you could have such feelings for somebody that you've known only a few days, but his death really emphasized, you know, just put a face on what was going on in Iraq, and I was very emotional – and I still am. I mean, we're coming up on a year anniversary, and we've donated now more than, we're coming up on 30,000 soccer balls to our troops. I just don't think there's any way, unless you don't have a heart to – regardless of how you feel about the war. If you're a

Republican, Democrat, it doesn't matter. I mean, these are human beings. These are U.S. citizens that are over there – and yeah. I was very emotional and very moved by his death.

MH: Do you have any last comments or questions or anything I might have missed?

ST: The only thing I would say is, there's a lot of talk always about whether or not an embed program is worth it, or is it good. In this reporter's position, this is crucial to how we cover what our military is doing. You don't have to be in the back pocket of them, you don't have to agree with everything they say, and certainly I would challenge, you know, people over there when I was there and ask tough questions. But how in the world can we know in a military zone what's really going on and what's the true story if journalists aren't allowed to cover it?

Interview 2: Charlie Brennan, Rocky Mountain News

MH: And here we go. Once again, I greatly appreciate your taking the time to do this with me. (I) can't say how much it means to speak with you, sir. It's really a privilege.

CB: And let me just be clear – you're recording this?

MH: Yes sir.

CB: Okay. All right, that's fine.

MH: I'm going to ask you a few questions, just generic ones about the length of your stay and some questions about safety, but I'm also going to ask you some questions about feelings and emotions that may have played into your coverage of Iraq. First of all, I did some preliminary research on your stay, and I wasn't able to find exact figures. How long was your stay?

CB: It was not very long. I was in Kuwait prior to the start of the war for about, I would say, 10 days or so, and then – 10 days or two weeks, and then I was in Iraq for about the first week, maybe the first seven or eight days of the war. So it was not very long.

MH: That must have been pretty incredible, because from what you've told me, from what I understand, you were one of the first people there. Was it pretty surreal?

CB: Yeah. Well, it was, and one aspect of that was, when I entered Iraq, which was within 24 hours of the start of the invasion, it was with the belief or the understanding that we were only going to be going a short distance into Iraq. There was a general who I was traveling with, and what we were told was that it was going to be a two- or three-day sort of reconnaissance mission in order for that general to establish whether supplies were getting where they needed to go, but to our surprise, he just kept going. (laughs) ... It was, for two or three days, we didn't turn back and go back down to Kuwait, we just kept going further and further into Iraq. And it was clear, it became clear that he, that he was not turning around and that he – I'm sure I don't know this, because I left before he got there, but I presume that he and the people that I was with probably went all the way to Baghdad. When I left them, they were quite close to Najaf – N-a-j-a-f. That's about as far as I got with them, but they kept going. But yeah, to use the word "surreal" – yeah. The first surreal thing was, "Wait a minute, this isn't just a two- or three-day excursion. They're not turning around."

MH: What unit were you embedded with?

CB: I was with the 5th Corps – you know, Roman numeral V Corps – which is based out of Germany. The specific unit of the V Corps that I was assigned to was primarily charged with supply and support assignments. And that didn't on the face of it sound too

necessarily sexy to me, but that really put them right in the thick of things, because it was, I think it was the 3rd Infantry Division was sort of the tip of the spear as far as the push up toward Baghdad, and the people I was with were basically charged with making sure the 3rd I.D. had – was getting all the supplies they needed. So, we were kind of right behind them, going up generally toward Baghdad.

MH: What was your “welcome to Iraq” moment?

CB: (laughs) I would guess that my “welcome to Iraq” moment was probably the first – probably the first Scud drill, back when we were still down in Kuwait. I was stationed, the soldiers I was with were stationed at what was called Camp Virginia, which was one of the bases established there in the northern Kuwaiti desert, close to the Iraq border. And the first time their alarms, the Scud alarms went off, and we had to dive into shelters and get into, get our masks on and all that as quickly as possible. That was one of the first moments that I started thinking, “Okay, this is – this is for real.” And the funny thing about it – the funny thing about it was that we had been, you know, all the journalists had been given stern lectures about how you must be able to get your mask on properly within 45 seconds or 30 seconds, whatever it was – and it was funny to find that soldiers there in the shelter who were struggling with this thing more than I was. But yeah, I at the time was 48 years old. I had never served in the military – I had never even briefly considered ever serving in the military. So to find myself in a shelter, putting on a gas mask and surrounded by all these guys with heavy weapons, it was – it was a wakeup moment.

MH: Did you ever interact with any unilateral journalists?

CB: Let me think – I don’t believe so. No. I don’t think so.

MH: Did military officials ever disallow you from printing information?

CB: No. That was something that I was interested to see. The only time that I came close to being censored was more a case of self-censoring, and I’ll explain. I had written something in a story that I had heard in a briefing, and after I wrote it, I looked at my computer screen and I thought, “I wonder if this would cause them any problems.” And it was a question that would probably go to their security. And so I showed it to a public affairs officer and asked him if he felt that it would cause any issues, and he said, “I don’t think so, but let me show it to one of our guys in intelligence and see what he says.” And so he showed it to the guy in intelligence, and the guy said, “You know, if you could leave that out, that would be preferable.” So, you know, again that was sort of me showing it to them – me having my own question about it, showing it to them. And had I never shown it to them, it would’ve gone into the paper and – yeah, there was never one case of censoring up front in which they – they never asked to see copy before it was filed. And I found that pleasantly surprising.

MH: Were you ever concerned for your safety?

CB: Yeah. (laughs) Yes, I was. And, you know, this goes to why I was not there very long. I, at the time I went over there, was newly married – newly remarried, I should say. And I had a 19-year-old daughter from my first marriage. They were both very unenthusiastic about me going. And I had said to them, “Don’t worry about it, I’ll be fine.” And I told them – and I realize now, that this was probably a mistake – but I said to them that if I found myself in a position of immediate jeopardy that I would bail, that I would get out. You know, I made that to them as a promise. Once I got over there and particularly, once we got into Iraq, I found that I had absolutely zero ability to control whether I was in jeopardy or not. And we, we were under, I would say, we were under attack briefly during the actual invasion and push up toward Najaf. And then once we reached Najaf, there were a couple occasions in which we had intelligence that said that we were going, that we were under threat of immediate attack from Iraqi Republican Guard. That never happened. We never did come under attack from them, but on two different occasions, we had word that, you know, it could be imminent. And that just made me realize that I was not in a position where I had any control over my own safety. And there were times that I saw, literally saw, you know, I saw fear in the eyes of the soldiers I was with, and that just made me realize that, if what I said to my family meant anything at all, then it was time for me to get out. And so I did. It was a tough decision for me to make because I was there to do a job for my newspaper, but I felt that what I had promised my wife and my daughter was more important.

MH: It’s good that you kept your word.

CB: Yeah.

MH: Did you ever have any concerns about maintaining professionalism?

CB: Boy. I guess I would ask how you mean professionalism.

MH: Maintaining your demeanor around the troops and just, I mean – I’m trying not to get into a question I’m going to ask later, but, just a professional journalistic atmosphere as far as ...

CB: Yeah. As a matter of fact, there’s one thing I recall now, and I don’t know if this goes to your question, but maybe it does. We were told by the Defense Department that there were a few rules by which we had to abide in order to participate in the embedding. One of them was that we were not allowed to carry firearms. And, you know, that was fine to me because I wouldn’t know what to do with a firearm anyway. And there – once we got into Iraq, the invasion was under way, and we started having, you know, periods where we felt we might be in imminent jeopardy, soldiers were asking me, a couple soldiers were asking me to carry – to carry a sidearm. And I said to them, “You know, there’s two problems with that.” I told them one is that I’d been told I wasn’t allowed to, and the other thing I told them was that I wouldn’t know what to do with it if I had one – because I’ve just never had any firearms training of any kind. And they, they pressured me a little bit, but they essentially, they eventually relented, and I never did have to do that. Another journalist I was with who was sort of in the same, roughly in the same

group that I was with, a woman from the *Miami Herald*, was pressure to do so, so much that she finally relented and agreed to carry one. So, that would be an example where I felt that, you know, certain professional issues were being jeopardized – but that’s how it played out for me.

MH: That’s exactly what I needed. Did you ever deliberately hold back information due to your concerns about your closeness with the troops?

CB: Let me think. The only example I can think of is – there was one, I think, sergeant major who I spent a lot of time with, who sort of, in the brief time I was there, sort of became a sort of running character in several of my stories. And he was smoking cigars and didn’t want me to put that in any stories because he said his wife would be angry at him if she read that, because he wasn’t supposed to be smoking. But in all honesty, that’s like the only thing I can think of that I might have, just as a descriptive detail, tossed into a story which I withheld.... You use the word “closeness.” I did feel like the guy was becoming something of a friend, and he was definitely like, you know, protecting me through my time over there, and I thought that was the least I could do in return. I don’t think that that really compromised my stories in any significant way.

MH: That leads perfectly into my next question. Did you ever get a sense of commonality or brotherhood with the troops during your stay?

CB: Yes, to the extent that it had been a long time since I had been, like, to camp or been on a sports team or been on something that was a real sort of, like, guy-heavy environment, if you know what I mean. And I definitely, there was definitely a sense of fraternity that developed. And I did very much have the sense all along that if anything happened, if anything bad happened to these guys, then something bad was likely going to happen to me. And similarly, if I was to come out of this safely, it was probably going to depend on them also coming out of it safely. So there was very much a feeling of affinity and, you know – I wanted things to work out well for them for many reasons, including the fact that that would probably mean they’d work out well for me too.

MH: In what way was your objectivity affected by your proximity to military units, if at all?

CB: Well, I don’t think that – when you say objectivity, do you mean sort of like with regards to how I perceived the overall mission, and things like that?

MH: Uh-huh. And also, going back a little bit to the – to the professionalism question. Were you able to maintain a level head, both sides of the story? And – yeah, what you just mentioned as well.

CB: Yeah. I think, you know, probably you would have a very hard time finding a journalist who would ever say, “Oh, my objectivity was severely compromised – my objectivity went out the window.” Probably few journalists are ever going to admit that, so the fact that I say that it didn’t happen to me – you know, maybe I’m not the best

judge of that. But I will say that before I went over there, I thought that the war was probably a bad idea and probably not warranted. And I felt that way the whole time that I was there, and I felt that way when I got back. And so I can't say that being with them and being part of this ever affected my own sort of personal view of things. And I do, I would like to think that anybody reading my stories – this is probably the most important thing – I don't think anybody reading my stories would've come away with a perception that I was definitely for the war or against the war. I think I was able to keep that, keep my own thoughts aside – sort of to the side in writing about it. I hope I was.

MH: Last question. Did your own emotions or experiences ever figure into how you covered a particular story?

CB: Probably yes, to the degree that with – you know, and again, I was there such a short time – but I know that on several of the stories that I wrote, I wrote in basically a – I was basically scared. Either scared by the experience, personally scared by the experience I was writing about, or a couple times, scared while I was in the course of writing them. And that's because I'd never been in a war environment before. And, you know, I wish that I had done a lot more reading of coverage by other journalists from other wars before I went over there, because certainly I've read a lot more since I've come back. And, you know, many, many, many – many brave journalists have gone through much worse than I did and, I think, probably managed to be a little bit more, be a little bit less – I wouldn't say that my copy was hysterical that I filed when I was over there, but I think, I think sometimes I was perhaps a little bit too, a little bit more shaken by some of the things I experienced than I should have been. And I think a veteran war correspondent would have probably handled the stuff a little bit, with a little bit more – less hysteria. And again, that's not – that's not really the word I want to use. I don't think this hysteria comes through in my copy, but I wish that I had been maybe a little – a little bit more composed myself at the time that I was writing some of these things, because it was just – it was all so new to me, and different and scary and... I think that if I had had more experience as a war correspondent, perhaps my copy, the things, the stories that I filed might have read differently.

MH: All right! That's it.

Interview 3: Mark Johnson, Charlotte Observer

MH: All right, here we go. First question, Mr. Johnson. How long was your stay?

MJ: It was around two months.

MH: That is on the long end of – from what I’ve researched. Wow. Why were you there two whole months?

MJ: You know, we went – went over there, met up with them when they were staging in Kuwait, and we were in Kuwait for a couple weeks, and then into Iraq. So yeah, there was a little – a little pre-invasion time, and then just basically stayed with them as they advanced for a while and things just kind of, you know, settled down a little bit, and it seemed like it was time to come back.

MH: What unit were you embedded with?

MJ: It’s the 82nd Airborne Division.

MH: What was your “welcome to Iraq” moment?

MJ: When we landed at night, in what’s called a “combat landing” in a C-130. Combat landing kind of means it’s a very fast nosedive to the airstrip – you know, they hit the deck, the plane comes to a halt, the ramp goes down, and, you know, it’s like out of the movies. You know, “Move, move, move!” You know, everybody’s piling out of this thing, and it’s pitch dark out. The runways, I guess, it was illuminated in some ways for the pilots – but not like you would expect because they, they didn’t want to make targets for anybody. So, it was just all – it was, you know, it’s the middle of the night and just all these things are happening. You’re lugging your gear and getting out of the plane and trying to stay with your guys and – that was pretty much it. That was a good sensory overload.

MH: I can imagine. Did you ever interact with any unilateral journalists during your time in Iraq?

MJ: Only in – only in Kuwait, when we were waiting to embed. I saw some friends in Kuwait City, but that’s – I guess you probably wouldn’t qualify that as interaction because we weren’t, you know, out in theater.

MH: That makes sense. Did military officials ever disallow you from printing information?

MJ: No, but I’ll qualify that. We agreed to never disclose what they called “operational information” – and that is, we would never write about where our unit was going next. And that’s pretty much a common sense thing. They didn’t have to argue with us over

that – I mean, that just seemed pretty logical. That’s really the only aspect I can think of, you know, in which we refrained from writing anything.

MH: Were you ever concerned for your safety over there?

MJ: Yes.

MH: Can you describe one or two anecdotes where you were concerned?

MJ: Well, I mean, you know, we had a couple mortar attacks. We had – there was a – we had – when I say “we,” the unit I was with had secured what appeared to have been some kind of a school at some point. It was several small, little small one-level buildings. And a firefright broke out – so that was fairly intense. And – but the one I always tell people, that the – actually, probably the most scared I was, was riding in a Humvee with a couple sergeants who really just didn’t quite have everything together. And we were trying to follow a convoy, and it was dark and we kept the lights off because it was dark. And you couldn’t see, and they couldn’t see to drive, and we’re barreling down the road at 50 miles an hour and I was – I was convinced we were going to end up smashing into something.

MH: Did you ever have any concerns about maintaining professionalism?

MJ: Not – well, I guess, maintaining professionalism in terms of, like, being able to do the job, being fair?

MH: Yeah, or just maintaining your professional demeanor as a reporter, say, if you were handed firearms and you’re already in a non-combatant role. Just something like that, that – were there any situations that would have caused you to maintain that professional, journalistic attitude?

MJ: You know, we were (laughs) We were going to the bathroom in ditches, trying to keep from being dehydrated, you know, breathing sand all the time. It was – nobody kept the kind of decorum that you do in a normal setting here. But in terms of – there was never a situation like you’re, like you’re mentioning where, you know, if you had to take a weapon and defend or something like that. I mean, I would have done it, but fortunately I never, never faced that – I mean, in the time that I was there.

MH: Okay. I was just wondering, because I had another reporter earlier today who I interviewed, Charlie Brennan of the Denver Post.

MJ: Uh-huh.

MH: No, not the Denver Post, the Rocky Mountain News. I’m sorry, I’m getting my Denver papers mixed up. He – he had that situation come up, where it was a challenge to his professionalism, where there was a dangerous spot and he was offered a sidearm. And he’d already been told by his – it was the military superiors

or something, that, you know, “You’re a noncombatant – you can’t have firearms.” And then here comes this soldier offering him – offering him this for protection. He said, “No, I can’t take it.” So that was the kind of situation I was alluding to.

MJ: Yeah, and I think that’s a fair point of inquiry. Fortunately, you just never – you know, I think – I think, maybe jokingly somebody offered at some point. But there was never a situation – it was never during a time when we were in danger, where I might have seriously considered it.

MH: Okay. Did you ever deliberately hold back information due to your concerns about your closeness with the troops?

MJ: No. No. In fact, the Humvee ride that I told you about – I wrote a column in which I referred to the sergeants as “Barney” and “Gomer,” and I talked about just what, you know, what a ride through hell it was. Because what I tried to convey was that – one thing I tried to get across was, what I – a thing among the things I observed, I observed some just amazingly impressive things that the Army did, that they were able to do in such a fast time, and, you know, lots of things. But I also showed the things that were sort of Army embarrassments, that you know, the sort of things you might think of with any large bureaucratic organization, but you know, applied to a battlefield setting.

MH: Okay. Did you ever get a sense of commonality or brotherhood with the troops during your stay?

MJ: Between me and them?

MH: Yes.

MJ: Yeah, a little bit – just in the sense of, you know, we were there and, you know, I was sleeping in the same tent and/or on the sand, or whatever, and, you know, we’re eating the same MREs, and – that kind of stuff. I think that’s – that’s just natural.

MH: Okay. In what way was your objectivity affected by your proximity to military units, if at all?

MJ: I guess – first, I’d say that I’m, I’m one of these people that believes there’s no such thing as being objective. We all come at things with our own personal experiences, our own personal biases. So you don’t write objective stories – you write fair and balanced stories. Second, you know, being embedded with a unit – there’s, it’s just atypical from what you do like I do, day in day out – state government. You don’t – there aren’t really two sides to write. You can’t really hop over and ask the Iraqis what they think about that latest artillery barrage. So, you know, the stories are just naturally going to have only, you know, one perspective to them. So that is, that is difficult, in one sense, but my company – it was Knight-Ridder at that time, it’s now McClatchy – did the smart thing, in that they had lots of embedded reporters. And they would take what we sent in, and they would do overall reports, including from the different embedded reporters in the

units, but then also from, you know, people in Baghdad, and people with, you know, command units – all sorts of things.

MH: Okay. Last question. Did your own emotions or experiences ever figure into how you covered a particular story?

MJ: No, not in how I covered a story. You know, I think that – I mean, there were very frustrating, scary times. I mean, you could say maybe that factored into what I did in terms of, I don't know, seeking cover or how, how willing I was to kind of, you know, be exposed to risk and that kind of thing. But in terms of what I actually wrote about, I don't think so. Yeah, I don't know if this would be emotion. I mean, I guess one thing – I wrote about this and I've talked about this before, I mean – one thing that surprised me was how rare it was to run into somebody who was eager for the fight. I think, we all know, you know, the stereotype of the gung-ho soldier, you know, wants to go to battle. But it was just extraordinarily rare to run into somebody who came close to that. These were, you know – most of the folks you talked to. And mind you, this is back, this is 2003, this is, you know, before – this is when there was still a very, you know, a pretty positive attitude about this. Most of the folks you talked to, they kind of – they just wanted to get the job done and go home.

MH: Okay. That was all the questions I had for you. Do you have any final comments, just observations about your experience?

MJ: Yeah, just that it was – it was a great, it was a great system, it was a very smart thing for everybody, you know. The military got stories told that otherwise would never be told. I mean, war coverage had too often been antiseptic from, you know, way back and, and not on the lines, so that was helpful to them. It was helpful to us in that we had access to the things we hadn't had access to before. And it was helpful to, you know, the readers and viewers because they were able to see up close what was happening.

MH: Okay. I think that's all I needed.

Interview 4: Jeremy Redmon, Atlanta Journal-Constitution

MH: Okay, here we go. The first two questions are going to relate to your experiences – just sort of a cursory overview. And then the last several questions are going to relate to specific aspects of that coverage.

JR: Okay.

MH: So, first question is, how long was your stay in Iraq?

JR: By the way, I was just curious how you got my name and number and everything, or why you figured on interviewing me.

MH: (laughs) Good question. As a part of my preliminary research on whom I could interview, I basically typed in embedded reporters in a Google search engine and then I searched for both newspapers from my hometown, which is the Denver metro area, ...

JR: Right.

MH: And then just papers around – the big ones that I knew like the Charlotte Observer, Richmond Times-Dispatch, Virginian-Pilot, ...

JR: Right.

MH: Fairly large regional papers around Liberty that would be conducive to that. So, your name came up on the Richmond Times-Dispatch, and through a little bit more research I was able to find out that you'd now started working with AJC, which I understand is a very reputable publication.

JR: All right, go ahead and shoot with your questions.

MH: First question – how long was your stay?

JR: I made three trips to Iraq over the course of five months. The first time, I was there for five weeks, the second time I was there for ten weeks, and the third time I was there – it was roughly six weeks.

MH: Wow. Pretty impressive, given that a lot of journalists only make one trip and then they call it quits.

JR: I was interested in continuing it. You know, I enjoyed the experience that I had the first time and the second time, so I kept doing it.

MH: That makes sense. Well, since you made three trips, were you embedded with the same unit all three times, or did you have different units?

JR: Three different units. The first time, I was embedded with the Virginia National Guard Unit. It's the 276th Engineer Battalion based out of Richmond. And the second and third time I was based with several units, mainly the 48th Brigade Combat Team, which is based in Georgia – the Georgia National Guard Unit. However, I was also embedded with a Marine unit that handles personnel recovery and then I was embedded with a Georgia-based military police unit.

MH: And those last few you mentioned were both the second and the third time?

JR: Correct.

MH: Okay. What was your “welcome to Iraq” moment?

JR: Can you hold on one second? (elevator music plays for a few minutes) Hey, you there?

MH: Yes sir.

JR: Sorry about that. I had a source call me on a different story, but go ahead with your questions.

MH: Okay. Third question. What was your “welcome to Iraq” moment?

JR: Why would you – what do you mean by “welcome to Iraq” moment? Can you elaborate?

MH: Yes – the point in time in your – I guess it would probably be your first embed experience where you realized, “Man, this isn’t the United States anymore. I’m actually here.”

JR: Let's see – probably, it was the first night we got there, I think. That would have been December of 2004. The photographer and I, Dean Hoffmaier, had just put our gear away in our hooch and we were, you know, looking for a mission to go out on, and the engineers I was embedded with said that they had just gotten a call about an improvised explosive device, or a suspected one, in the middle of the street in Mosul, which is a town in northern Iraq – it's the third largest city in Iraq. And so the very night we arrived with our unit that we were embedded with, we went out that night with the – with that unit, and they had spotted this suspicious-looking bag in the middle of the street, and we were with them. I remember standing in the middle of the street that night in downtown Mosul, thinking, “Yeah, I finally have arrived. I'm in Iraq.” It was an intense situation because they weren't sure if this was an actual device that insurgents had planted. And they used a robot to go up to it and place some plastic explosives on it and destroy it. And sure enough, when they went and investigated the remains of the explosion, it was a mine that had been rigged to explode remotely. So, that was my “welcome to Iraq” moment.

MH: Did you ever interact with any unilateral journalists during your experiences in Iraq?

JR: Let's see. I think I did, briefly. I crossed a few paths with a few of them – a Yahoo! reporter who was doing multimedia, and I met him in southern Iraq. And then there was a New York Times reporter. And then, in Mosul – who I don't think she was necessarily embedded with a specific unit, since reporters can jump around. They can be in embed from one unit to the next, so the term “unilateral,” I guess, is subjective. There's certainly, I'm sure, reporters that are never embedded – maybe they go around from place to place. But there are others that I guess the ones that I'm talking to, I'm talking about would be more folks that are maybe leapfrogging from one unit to the next. Those are the folks that I'd run into, but mostly I would tell you that the journalists I've interacted with in Iraq were embedded.

MH: Did military officials ever disallow you from printing information?

JR: No. There are certain rules that you abide by as an embedded journalist. In fact, there's a printed document that you're presented with by the military before you embed with a unit that lays the ground rules. And any of the other journalists I'm sure you've talked to may have mentioned them or were asked to sign this document. These things are practical rules that I would abide by regardless of the military asking me to abide by them. These are ones such as not disclosing when an upcoming mission would take place, or exactly where the precise troop strength of a unit that's about to undertake a mission – things that would jeopardize the safety or lives of the soldiers. But I never had, any time, somebody in the military telling me I could not print something before I was about to do so.

MH: My next question was geared to reporters whom I didn't really check into – I didn't know a whole lot about their background in Iraq, but as I looked about you, I found that you were connected with an incident that had a certain amount of notoriety. Were you ever concerned for your safety over there in Iraq?

JR: Which incident are you referring to?

MH: I believe it's the one where the rocket hit the mess tent, I think.

JR: Well, in that case, that was December of 2004. A suicide bomber had walked into the mess tent and exploded his bomb vest that he was wearing, and it killed, you know, more than a dozen people and wounded close to 70. And certainly at that moment I was afraid for my safety. That was a pretty intense moment that was only – it only happened several days after I had arrived, you know. So that would have probably been my second “welcome to Iraq” moment. But, you know, over the course of my reporting in Iraq, that was probably the most significant close call that I had, because that bomb exploded about 50 paces from where I was standing. I had – let's see – been through five convoys that had been attacked with improvised explosive devices, including one that hit the vehicle I was riding in. I had been in a mortar attack, where rounds were landing near the

photographer and I, maybe 20 meters away. Let's see. A rocket-propelled grenade went over the base – that was another instance. Those are some of the ones that come to mind, but yeah, certainly – during my reporting, I've been afraid for my safety.

MH: Sounds like you've got hit – well, not hit, but just experienced that safety concern a lot more than most.

JR: I think that the soldiers have experienced, you know, far more than what I have gone through in my brief time there. But I could tell you probably any journalist that's been there for as long as I have or more has probably experienced as many if not more incidents like that. It's a pretty chaotic country with some incredibly dangerous areas, even for the military.

MH: Did you ever have any concerns about maintaining professionalism?

JR: Elaborate on your question.

MH: Professionalism in the sense of journalistic integrity and the professional atmosphere that you carried about with you as a reporter. For example, Charlie Brennan alluded to a time where military officials that he trained under had instructed him to not hold any weapons, that he was a non-combatant. And yet, during some times when the situation got a little intense, he was instructed by members of the military who hadn't had the same briefing, or what have you, to give him a sidearm. And he refused, because he had already been told that, "No, you're a non-combatant. You can't – you can't do this." So situations like that that might have compromised your professional demeanor. Did you ...?

JR: I understand – yeah. The situation that he's describing, I had that same – same situation offered several times by soldiers. They're well-meaning, and they just don't know that we're non-combatants. We're not allowed to carry arms as embedded journalists or, really, as journalists covering a conflict like that. But there was one – I can remember distinctly where I was embedded with that Engineer unit from Virginia and we were traveling across country from Mosul to Kuwait, and I was in the back of a five-ton truck and the two – there was a private first class and a specialist in the back with me, and they offered me an M-16 in case things got bad. But, you know, I refused, and it wouldn't be something that I would reach for. However, if it came down to it and my life was in danger or the lives of other soldiers were in danger and there was no alternative, I would defend myself.

MH: Did you ever deliberately hold back information due to your concerns about your closeness with the troops?

JR: Well, insofar as it related to the embed rules, yes – like disclosing an upcoming mission; force protection, which means the fortifications around a base, in other words, how bases are protected – that you wouldn't disclose things like that to the media. Because I remember, we were reporting on after the effects of the suicide bombing in

Mosul. We're interested in reporting on just how strong the defenses are of the base and what the soldiers go through in protecting the perimeter of the base, because this suicide bomber had somehow – had gotten onto the base. So, I remember at that time, we went up in a guard tower and interviewed soldiers that were on guard duty at least on two different locations, and I don't know that I would consciously hold back things at the time about specific things that were being used to protect the base, but I know under the circumstances that you wouldn't reveal, for instance, that they had a 50-caliber machine gun or a Bravo 240 machine gun at a specific location on the edge of the base, or how many soldiers were at that location guarding that entrance. Those are things you just wouldn't – wouldn't reveal. So, in those instances you would be more general or perhaps vague, while still be able to get your point across and tell the story, you know, accurately and comprehensively.

MH: Maybe my next couple questions will help clarify just what I was intending with that question. Did you ever get a sense of commonality or brotherhood with the troops during your stay?

JR: Certainly. Yeah, many times.

MH: Do you think you can describe one or two anecdotes of that?

JR: Yeah. There was a Puerto Rican National Guard unit that was attached to the brigade I was embedded with from Georgia, and they were very friendly. There was a real brotherhood among them, and after going out on a mission with them, I remember they invited us to their tent and they cooked a traditional Puerto Rican meal. I think it was like, you know, rice and beans and some type of stew. And there's essentially, you know, a real, you know – certainly some type of bond that, you know, goes on between them, but also, you know, between us and them. The photographer who was with me at the time, I remember remarking just how pleasant the experience was.

MH: In what way was your objectivity affected by your proximity to military units, if at all?

JR: I would say none. I didn't have that problem that I can recall.

MH: Good. So you were able to pretty much report on anything and everything, like aside from the agreement you'd already signed, where you were pretty much unrestricted?

JR: Well, I mean you – there are certain restrictions you can imagine. Geographic, one. I mean, you – you go where the military goes, you know. You don't have the freedom to leave the base and sort of walk into town. You wouldn't want to, because of the fear of being captured, but you're restricted in that regard. Unilateral journalists, as you call them, don't have that same constraint.

MH: Uh-huh. But I've found in my research that there's sort of a trade-off between the embed and the unilateral. Whereas the unilateral is able to interview a number of other sources like Iraqi units and maybe citizens or members of the government, but he or she of that unilateral bent can't be on the front lines like you guys can.

JR: Right, there are tradeoffs. You're right. And let me give you an example of what you face as an embedded journalist. You have, you know, tremendous access in many ways to interviewing soldiers that you're embedded with. But it is certainly difficult to interview Iraqis in the country, in the cities, unless you're out with those military units. But the challenge you face is, they – you're going where the military is going. So you have certain options to interview just your average-day Iraqis on these missions, but the – if you don't speak Arabic, as I don't, you rely on military translators. So you're – there's, you know, first, you know, there's the Iraqi perceiving you with military, so you have that perception, but also you're being filtered by a translator. So, you know, several steps that you're going to, to get – to get those interviews that are done. So unilateral journalists perhaps wouldn't have those challenges that we have. They can have their own interpreter, you know, they can – if they speak Arabic, that's a benefit. So, you see what I'm – you see what I'm saying?

MH: Yes sir. That's an interesting aspect to the unilateral versus embed debate that I hadn't considered.

JR: Well, put yourself in the Iraqi's shoes too. If you have a journalist coming up to you who's surrounded with soldiers with body armor and guns, maybe that would color how you answer questions to an embedded journalist.

MH: (laughs) Yeah, I guess it would. Okay. Last question. Did your own emotions or experiences ever figure into how you covered a particular story?

JR: Yeah, I think it was – it highlighted my sensitivity to, you know, being sensitive in my reporting, particularly in cases where I was reporting on, you know fatalities. That made me more, I hope, conscientious about what is fair and accurate and balanced – things we would normally do as journalists, but also just sensitive to families back home and the fellow soldiers. You need to report what exactly happened, but at the same time kind of be sensitive to those around you. In the mess test bombing, for instance, you know, there was two that had been killed from the unit I was embedded with, and you're very aware and conscious of that, because the soldiers that you're aware of, you know, just lost two of their friends. So, it can be a trying circumstance for a journalist to maintain that balance, when you want to interview other soldiers about what just, what happened. You have to walk very carefully and very cautiously into a situation. They're angry, understandably very upset, so in some cases you just – you give them some time before you approach them. And when you do approach them, you're very respectful and you, you know – it's not, it's a very difficult balancing act, but, you know, you do your best in those situations. But certainly, it heightens your sensitivity.

MH: Do you have any final comments, questions, observations about the embed process from your experience?

JR: No. I just had a very successful time. I learned a lot. I think it made me a much better drawer in the experience, and they're memories that I'll have for the rest of my life, so, you know, it was a very fulfilling, life-changing experience for me.

MH: Is it one you'd do again in a heartbeat?

JR: I would. Yeah, I would – if the opportunity presents itself. I certainly would.

Interview 5: Lou Hansen, The Virginian-Pilot

MH: Yeah, thank you for agreeing to do this. Okay, first question. How long was your stay in Iraq?

LH: My stay in – well, we actually went to a couple different places. We went to the 5th Fleet in the Persian Gulf with the Navy and to Kuwait. And we got to the border of Iraq, but we did not get into Iraq. The stay lasted 17 or 18 days.

MH: Okay. Probably one of the shorter trips I've heard. I interviewed Jeremy Redmon of the Atlanta Journal-Constitution. He went three times for a combined five months. But that's okay.

LH: Yeah, that's a long haul.

MH: Okay, second question. You were embedded with which unit again?

LH: I was embedded with the – with several units. I was aboard the aircraft carrier Teddy Roosevelt, the destroyer San Jacinto, and I was on the ground embedded with a Navy logistics support team. They're basically customs agents and cargo haulers.

MH: What was your "welcome to Iraq" moment?

LH: It was – gosh, there were several. I went out to – well, we went out to an oil platform in the Persian Gulf. It's where about – there are two basic oil terminals that Iraq uses to ship its oil, and it's where tankers pull up, supertankers pull up and fill. Well, we board this tanker in the middle of the Gulf and got to meet the Iraqi navy – and these guys were incredibly friendly and seemed to enjoy working side by side with the – with the military, the U.S. military. But at the same time, they were just clearly from two very different worlds. The Iraqis were loosey-goosey – They couldn't, you know, hold formation in a muster. One of them dropped their AK-47, you know, while they were mustered and, you know, being addressed by their commanding officer. The U.S. sailors were, you know, ramrod-straight, you know, armed to the – to the teeth and, you know, with full protective gear. It was that – it was that kind of moment that I said, "Wow. You know, here are two very different cultures." The other moment really came when we went to the sterilization or – I forgot what it was called. It was basically the yards where they sent battle-damaged vehicles, Humvees, tanks and other combat vehicles. And we literally saw hundreds upon hundreds upon hundreds of vehicles just in all sorts of ways blown up. And you could – you really got a feel for the toll and the scope of the war at that moment. It was like lining up—oh, I don't know – ten car dealerships in the middle of the desert, and it was, you know – and every single one was either shot through with small-arms fire or RPG rounds or IEDs. And we were told that, you know, certain vehicles, when they had a red spot spray-painted on their windshield, was where someone was – had been killed. So you saw, you know, these vast fields and these vast lots with all these vehicles with the red dots on them, and, you know, you couldn't help but see the human toll that this was taking.

MH: I imagine that it really brought – brought it home for you because of the, like you said, the tangible way you could see that loss of life.

LH: I –

MH: Were you going to say something else?

LH: No. It was – it was just, you know, it's what we did. We saw an – an arms-length view of the war. So we weren't in the inner ring, but we were in the next-to-inner ring. And it was still much more than – than I could have imagined, reporting on this war. I'm a military reporter here in Virginia, and it was, you know, it made it many times more real.

MH: Did you interact with any unilateral journalists?

LH: No.

MH: Good! You – that's four out of the five responses that I got was a “no” or a “not really.”

LH: Yeah. We, we – yeah. Yeah. We were at – we were at larger bases, so I don't think too many unilaterals would have been – been coming around.

MH: Did military officials ever disallow you from printing information?

LH: Well, I think, Matthew – I mean, I don't know if you probably – if you, if you saw the stories that I wrote and my colleague Leo Kim photographed. We did get in trouble with the military. We were allowed to – to go places that we needed to go with an escort, and we were always escorted. But there was one story that we did about battle-damaged vehicles that – that, you know, I thought tried to convey what the, what the – what the cost was of the war and what the sailors were, were having to deal with on a daily basis – what that was like in Kuwait. And the, the story showed battle-damaged Humvees and described in some detail the – you know, the mess that was, that was inside one vehicle. That was published on a Saturday, and on a Monday the – one of our escorts came and – with a sidearm on – and took our press passes and told us we were going to be kicked off base and had lost our reporting privileges. So, you know, at that point we were, you know, we were pretty much done reporting. It was at the end of the trip, so, you know – the Army never prevented – well – the Army prevented us from having access to things. So, they don't censor – they didn't censor anything before the fact. If we asked about things and they didn't want to show them to us, they just said, “No, you can't go there.” So, they – they show you what they want to show you for the most part, and then you have to work around their agenda. I mean, it's – it's, you know, it's their base. It's their – it's their unit. It's their people. So you have to play by their rules. So, it was – you know, it was difficult, though. I mean, we – we were kicked out. We had permission to do everything that we did, and we were escorted. We weren't sneaking around. We told

everyone that we wanted to – what the story said we were going to do and we told everyone that we were a reporter and a photographer. But, you know, the story just upset the Army in particular. And we had signed an agreement at the beginning of the – well, actually, when we landed at the base. We were never told that we had to sign an embedding agreement beforehand, but – but they, you know, got us there and, and had us sign this – this long document that said, basically, you know, there are about 40 different things that you couldn't do. And basically, almost any of the reporting that we did there, they – they probably could have fault, found fault with and evicted us if they didn't like it. So, essentially that's what happened. They didn't like a story and they – and they evicted us. So –

MH: On a side note, would it be possible for me to procure a copy of that document for my report, or is that pretty much military property?

LH: You know, I probably have a copy of it around. And the – the clause that said, the one – it was, it was actually an addendum, I believe. It was “no pictures of battle-damaged vehicles.” And, you know (laughs) When we were told, you know, this – this trip was presented to us, and it was, you know, it was something that was arranged by the Navy. We were told that, “These are the jobs that – that the men you're covering will be doing. They're going to be customs agents that screen people before they leave the country, leave the war and go back to the United States. And they're going to be cleaning up the vehicles that – that have been damaged, and they're going to be going back to the United States.” So you know, on that basis, you know, we said, “Okay,” you know. It's not the sexiest story in the world, but – but we'll go and we'll do it. So, you know, I think, you know – you know, the broader point – it comes down to the negotiations, when you talked about reporting. A lot of times, it's, you know, “Can we go here? Can we talk to this person? This is a story that we'd like to tell.” And then, the military will counter with, “Well, that's a little sensitive. We can't have you do that.” Well, what we ended up getting were – were mixed messages. We – we, you know, which probably results because, you know, it's – one, it's an Army base, and we were with, you know, Navy public affairs officials. But, you know, the Army said, you know, “You can't – you can't do any of this stuff.” And yet, they knew we were going to all these places, that that's all there was to do. So, we always asked permission before we took photos and before we talked to people, so – yeah, you know. I mean, it was just – just, you know, ended up being a miscommunication between the two.

MH: Were you ever concerned for your safety?

LH: (laughs) You know, Matthew, they were going to kick us out. They – they said, “Get your stuff ready and be ready to – to go into Kuwait City. You're done – we're not going to take care of you anymore.” And, yeah, I mean they – the reserve commander came in and evicted us – and wagged his finger in my face. He was armed, and he said, you know, “Don't make me be an asshole.” And I said, “Look. I mean, I just want to explain what we're doing and why we're doing what we, we did.” If we went into Kuwait City, it would have been – yes, it could have been dangerous. No Navy personnel are allowed into Kuwait City without being armed and without, you know, going in teams of at least

two. We were told that there were al-Qaida elements in Kuwait City and that it's a dangerous place to be. And that's where they were going to drop us. So yeah, we were a little concerned. And, you know, and that lasted for about, you know, 24 hours. But honestly, I mean, that's a small worry compared with guys who are really embedding with, say, the Marines in Fallujah, you know. Ours was just on a scale many times less – many, many times less. But, you know, I'd like to go back and embed this summer. So, hopefully I'll have the opportunity to do that – be, be, be in Iraq with, with combat – with combat units. So –

MH: Did you ever have any concerns about maintaining professionalism?

LH: You know, I – no. I don't – I don't think I was compromised at all. We – we wrote, you know, probably a, you know, a front page story every other day on the average. So, we got our work done, and I think we had good relationships with the public affairs officials for the most part. You know, it's a great experience, because you get to spend a lot of time with, with the soldiers and sailors and Marines who are actually doing the work. It's non-scripted. It's just a real immersion into – into a person's life. And I, I think if you're a good reporter – the best reporters will, will find out more about a person than that person's husband or wife or child will ever know about their experiences at war. And I think that's – I think that's important for, you know, for the guys and for the men and women over there doing the job. I think they need to tell their story. I think in some ways, it's kind of – it's kind of cathartic. So I think that's kind of how I feel my, my professional role is. It's – it's to tell stories, and I think then, getting close to the subjects, I can remain in a professional way. And it benefits both of us, you know, on the best – you know, on the best of – you know, the best circumstances.

MH: Speaking of which, did you ever deliberately hold back information due to concerns about your closeness with the troops?

LH: There wasn't anything that – that required us to be, you know, that sensitive about, about operational security. In fact, I mean, there – there were things, yeah. We, we were told not to photograph certain landmarks on the base, and we did not photograph them and did not publish them. We were told not to give, you know, exact descriptions of where Camp Arifjan was, and these other, these other outlying camps were, on the Iraqi border. And we didn't identify those either. So, yeah, there – there are security concerns as far as locations of, of these support bases. And, and – we certainly, we certainly abided by that. And the other thing we did, we were told not to photograph the Iraqi navy with their – we were told to photograph them from behind, not show their faces, because it might jeopardize them. And, and we – we abided by that. I mean, the last thing you want to do is, is to be, you know, responsible for, for some, some guy who's making – you know, doing a very risky job, could cost him his life if he gets identified. So yeah, I mean, those were, were kind of security concerns that we worked around.

MH: Did you ever get a sense of commonality or brotherhood with the troops during your stay?

LH: Yeah, absolutely. I mean – (laughs) you know, one of the, one of the units happened to be from upstate New York, near my hometown in Rochester. And a bunch of guys, you know – I didn't know it at the time, but I probably played baseball against them in high school. So, yeah, we did. I mean, we paddled around, we joked. You can't get beer, there, but you know, I imagine – I imagine we would have. I thought we had – yeah, I thought we had, you know, good relations and, yeah. I mean, there is a sympathy that – that, you know, develops between these guys. Yeah. I mean, it was just – it was a short stay. I mean, I can't say that there's any fast friendships that we made, but if you spend even ten hours around someone and you're always asking them questions, you, you can't help but build a bond.

MH: In what way was your objectivity affected by your proximity to military units, if at all?

LH: I – I don't think there, there was. I mean, I – I don't think there was any real loss of objectivity. I don't think I was – I mean, I think I developed good relationships, but I don't think my reporting or – or, you know, photo – you know, photographs or photographers' images reflected, reflected any – any bias or lack of objectivity.

MH: Final question. Did your own emotions or experiences ever figure into how you covered a particular story?

LH: Yeah. I think the best stories are driven by emotions and things that interest – that interest you and, and strike you most powerfully. Seeing the battle-damaged Humvees and hearing the story of, you know, five young Marines being incinerated in the back of a – of a light-armored vehicle. That was a very moving moment. I mean, it was almost, you know – I was hearing a story. This story, we – we were at this, this LAV that was in this, you know, in this yard. And this – two sailors were talking in hushed tones, almost like you, you were at church. And we didn't say anything. I – I just, you know, uh, you know, just followed them around and listened and – yeah. I mean, it was – it was an emotional time to realize that, that five young men had been killed, you know, in this – in this very spot. Yeah. I think the best stories are – are fueled by that, by that emotion. And, you know, you know, you – you can be objective and be passionate at the same time. I mean, you can see – you can see all sides of an issue, I think, and be passionate about telling its story. At the same time, I don't think there's a conflict there.

MH: Any final remarks, comments, thoughts about the embed process?

LH: Well, it's like any other relationship between a reporter and his source. It has to be developed by – trust is the, is the best thing to have. It's – it's a wonderful – any, any reporter who's embedded will tell, will probably tell you that it's one of the best – it's one of the best reporting experiences of their careers. You, you really immerse yourself in a subject. And it's – it's really the best way to understand what the – the military is actually doing. And for a mid-sized paper like the Virginian-Pilot – we have a circulation of about 200,000, and it's you know, the largest in Virginia – but, you know, it, it really tells the story. If, if a reporter embeds, he can really bring home this big story in a very

personal way to the readers and the people of that city, and – and that’s tremendously important. That’s – you know, you, you – you can’t put a value on it, because it, it – it’s, it’s such a complicated and difficult issue to wrestle with, that you really need that lens. And I, I wish that, you know, more reporters from more papers could, could go over and – and do that, and, and tell those local stories. I think it’s just vital for informing the people ... of the work that these young men and women are doing.