

South Carolina National Guard Unit Public Affairs Representative Handbook



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Chapter 1 - How to Use This Handbook

Welcome to the world of Public Affairs and being a Unit Public Affairs Representative (UPAR).

So, why a UPAR handbook?

To stand the best chance of establishing and maintaining the good will and public acceptance that is essential for your unit to be combat ready and succeed, you have to exercise an element of Public Affairs. Whether it's meeting with a newspaper or television reporter, or using social media to share what is going on in your unit – this handbook will be designed to simplify your Public Affairs efforts. It provides you a ready reference for dealing with Public Affairs issues. The handbook will not make you a Public Affairs officer, but it can help make your Public Affairs work easier and more effective.

You really can't avoid Public Affairs. It's all around you and in your dealings with the members of your unit and the community. Public Affairs doesn't just happen when you're talking with a reporter. It is an all-encompassing effort which has its principal goal of ensuring your unit is well accepted and supported in the community. Public Affairs also means your members, their families and their civilian employers are equally well informed about National Guard programs and requirements which affect them.

Chapter 2 - Getting Started

Appointing Unit Public Affairs Representatives:

One of the first things a commander should do is appoint a Unit Public Affairs Representative, or UPAR, as they're often called. As you consider a person to appoint, here are some suggestions to guide your choice:

- Your UPAR should be someone who is familiar with your unit and has proven him or herself as dependable. You need someone you can rely on to work independently, without a great deal of supervision.
- The UPAR should be able to communicate well... that is, they should be able to talk clearly and effectively to unit members, or reporters, if needed, although we're not suggesting the UPAR replace the commander as spokesperson for your unit. That's a task that properly remains with the leadership of a unit.
- The UPAR must be well organized. Time is precious for you and the UPAR. There's isn't time to repeat instructions or closely supervise someone's work.

Supporting Your UPAR:

Whoever you appoint will need at least three important things from you, the commander, and your unit: time, material and support.

Time - It takes a while to get established as a UPAR, and it takes time to become efficient as a UPAR. Commanders need to allow for a period of adjustment while the UPAR learns the job. And to be fair to the person's career, consider appointing them to the UPAR assignment on orders so their performance reports can record the person's extra effort and skill. It also takes time for a UPAR to plan and carry out tasks.

Materials - The need for materials (supplies) will vary. But if you're planning to have a UPAR that person will need access to a personal computer with appropriate software. It is also helpful to have digital photography capability.

Support - This may be the most important element that a commander can provide a UPAR. Ensure the members of your staff know your UPAR and are aware that you support the UPAR's efforts. UPARs should attend appropriate staff meetings and be included in the planning process for unit events. A good UPAR is very much in the know regarding a unit's schedule. Post the UPAR's name prominently on your bulletin board and encourage unit members to talk with the UPAR about possible newsworthy events.

Recommended UPAR Duties:

- Meet with unit commander and establish a unit Public Affairs plan.
- Establish liaison with the SCNG Public Affairs Office and keep them updated on Public Affairs matters in your unit

- Work with your recruiters to publicize Guard enlistments and events
- Recommend items of interest/need to the commander for presentation to troops during weekend training.
- Assist in planning a unit open house or family day.
- Publicize unit participation in community projects or activities.
- Provide reference material for speeches or presentations.
- Manage a social media presence for your unit and ensure Family Readiness Groups are updated on Operational Security (OPSEC) and social media guidelines
- Keep your commander advised of your activities.
- Monitor social media

Chapter 3 – Working with Media

Working effectively with reporters requires preparation. This chapter provides information on how to improve your media relations skills.

If a serious incident takes place involving members of your unit, or something happens in your area involving National Guard property or equipment, **work with your chain of command to ensure that the full-time Public Affairs office in your State Headquarters is notified immediately.** If an accident involves serious injury, death or significant loss of property, the moment you finish calling for help from the police and/or fire departments, begin the process of notifying proper Public Affairs officials. This is one of the most valuable things a UPAR can do. If you've done your homework and made advance contact with your full-time Public Affairs office, these procedures should be part of every unit's Standard Operating Procedures.

Rely on the full-time Public Affairs office to take over the Public Affairs mission and stand by to help. Rule of thumb: Everything is “on the record” when talking to a reporter and once it's out there, it cannot be taken back.

With that warning in mind, here's a brief analysis of the relationship that the National Guard has with the media along with recommendations on how to make the most of all situations.

Fact - Reporters have a job to do. Their stories and pictures serve an important function in our democratic society. Remember from history that the first item in our nation's Bill of Rights deals with freedom of the press. It is a cherished freedom that missions of others in the world do not enjoy.

Fact - Reporters have bosses to serve and often work in a fiercely competitive marketplace. To be successful, they must be accurate and fast. Their eagerness to work quickly doesn't always mesh with the military's careful way of doing its business, but a smart UPAR can learn how to serve the media's requirements for speed and accuracy while at the same time protecting the best interests of the National Guard.

Fact - Reporters are eager to learn about new things, experience new situations and meet interesting people. All of these factors contribute to their mission of informing the public. Harness this natural curiosity to your unit's advantage. Even during a crisis or when something has happened that doesn't put your unit in a positive light, a savvy UPAR works hard to ensure the story is accurate, fast and fair.

Here are more guidelines:

Security - Under no circumstances may classified information be released to a civilian journalist. Do not render any comments on matters which are, or may be classified. If you know that information being sought is classified, indicate just that and decline to comment further, even in an indirect manner. If you're not certain whether something is classified, find out before you respond to the reporter. Then, act accordingly. Use common sense, but don't use "it's classified"

as a shield, either. A good UPAR should be notified in advance by proper military authorities if an operation or equipment contains classified information.

Accuracy - Along with speed, this is an equally important factor to any good reporter. Know what you are talking about. Use notes. Provide fact sheets or information papers to reporters, especially if the subject is complicated. While you want to be prompt with your response, take adequate time to be certain your information is accurate. Don't guess at an answer or be bullied by a reporter into responding with information that isn't correct. And if you make a mistake, contact the reporter quickly and set the record straight. Likewise, if a reporter had made a blunder in a story, contact them and politely explain the error.

Privacy - Be cautious when giving out information about members of your unit. A federal law called the Privacy Act is designed to protect the privacy of everyone and limits the types of information which you may provide about an individual. Check with your full-time state Public Affairs office for details of how the Privacy Act is handled in your state. The rules are grounded in common sense and are not that difficult to follow.

Freedom of Information - Along with the Privacy Act, another federal law called the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) is designed to keep government papers, documents and records open to the public. As a UPAR it is very unlikely you will ever get involved in FOIA actions. But understand that the law is designed to prevent government agencies, including the military, from withholding its documents in response to a legitimate request from a reporter or other individual, even if the information is potentially embarrassing.

Regulations and Policies - Military regulations and policies, including those by the National Guard and your state, also may have an impact on what types of information can be released to reporters and by whom. As a UPAR, it is unlikely that you will be involved in many of these situations. But it is useful to be aware there are regulations regarding the release of information regarding an accident, for instance. Notification of next of kin and discussions as to the cause of an accident are matters covered by military regulations. Policies, on the other hand, often are developed in response to local situations and should be discussed with your state's full-time Public Affairs office.

Propriety - Often, this involves common sense. It's not proper, for example, to discuss the gruesome details of an accident with a reporter. To help you know when and what to release, a UPAR should consult with higher headquarters or your state Public Affairs office. This might add delay to your ability to respond quickly, but it ensures accuracy and compliance with the rules that govern Public Affairs actions.

Spokesperson - Who speaks for a unit when a reporter wants to interview someone? The commander. A UPAR is likely to be very much involved in the process by providing support, and on occasion may have to pinch-hit, but it is the commander who has the responsibility of being the spokesperson for a National Guard unit. This doesn't mean that a reporter can never speak to someone else in a unit. A situation might require that a subject matter expert regarding a piece of equipment talk with journalists, but the commander remains responsible.

REMEMBER: All media contact MUST be coordinated through the State Public Affairs office.

Taking Questions - Sometimes, a UPAR can't respond to a reporter's questions. Time is short, the question too delicate or complicated, or you're not sure about the authority you have to discuss a certain situation. When that happens, the common sense answer is to courteously respond, "I don't have any information for you. Let me check and get back to you." This answer won't make the reporter happy and they're not likely to give up on the topic, but it provides you the opportunity to forward their question to your higher headquarters or the state Public Affairs office.

Public Affairs Guidance - Even if you're dealing with reporters on what you would consider a "good news" story, the development of well prepared and coordinated Public Affairs guidance can be your most valuable tool. Public Affairs guidance, or "PAG" as it is sometimes called, is your plan for action or plan for defense. The best way to start preparation of guidance is to pretend you are a reporter. What are the questions you'd like to ask, especially the really tough ones that get to the heart of an issue? Once you have your list of questions, work with subject matter experts in your organization to develop the answers. Make sure your answers are accurate; within the boundaries of laws, regulations and policies; and have been coordinated with your higher headquarters. Rehearse giving your answers with someone and make sure you don't forget to make your points. The effort required to develop good Public Affairs guidance can be considerable, but it often can be the single most effective tool you can have in talking with reporters.

Special circumstances:

On occasion, a unit commander or UPAR may find themselves responding to a reporter's questions that deal with accidents, criminal matters or political activity. Obviously, you will want to turn the questions to your full-time Public Affairs office. In those situations where help isn't immediately available, or you are waiting for assistance, here are suggestions to aid your efforts:

Accidents:

When accidents happen, especially if there are major injuries or a death, you can count on being contacted by reporters. This will happen very quickly. Your first knowledge of an accident might come from a reporter who has learned of the incident from independent sources and is calling you for a reaction.

At the same time that proper military authorities are getting involved, the UPAR should swing into action by first gathering accurate information about the accident. This information becomes the basis of a statement that you can prepare, or that you can forward to your full-time Public Affairs office so they can take the lead and begin responding to reporters. The statement is likely to be very brief; it will acknowledge obvious details and explain that military authorities are involved in the investigation of what happened. Often, you may have to work in cooperation with local civilian law enforcement authorities or rescue personnel. Keep in mind, under these circumstances the SCNG Public Affairs office must be notified and that office will take the lead on media queries.

Things to remember:

Names of dead or injured victims must not be released until the victims' next of kin have been properly notified. Before releasing any names, check with your higher headquarters to make certain that relatives have been properly notified. If you are uncertain, use this statement: "The names of the victims are being withheld pending notification of next of kin."

Do not speculate about the cause of an accident. An investigation will determine the cause. You can't deny the obvious. If an aircraft has crashed and burned, say that a crash and fire have taken place, but don't speculate as to the reasons why.

Criminal matters. Reporters may call your unit for information about a person who may be suspected of, or charged with committing a crime. The event may or may not involve the military or the person's affiliation with the National Guard. That won't stop a reporter from contacting you. When this occurs, you need to work quickly and carefully to alert your higher headquarters and the full-time state Public Affairs office. These people have the responsibility to prepare any media statements. Just as with an accident statement, you may be asked to help. And once a statement has been approved, you may be permitted to provide it to reporters.

The rights of a person accused of a criminal offense must be carefully guarded. This applies whether you are issuing a statement or responding to a reporter's questions concerning allegations of criminal activity. You must not provide any information that would interfere with an accused person getting a fair trial:

- If you have received permission to release information about a criminal act, do not release any information except verified facts.
- Do not comment on an accused person's character or behavior before, during or after a start of an investigation or arrest.
- Do not comment on evidence.
- Do not offer any opinion about the guilt of the accused.

Political activity:

The realm of politics at any level - local, state or national - offers another Public Affairs challenge to commanders and UPARs. As a member of the National Guard you have the right to vote and are encouraged to do so. You may encourage others to vote, but when you are on duty, you cannot participate in partisan political activity.

- You cannot distribute, email or promote material supporting or commenting directly or indirectly on a political party or candidate using government equipment or in the official capacity as a Guard member on duty.

- As a member of the National Guard, when you are on duty, do not solicit votes for a candidate or issue; do not make or solicit political contributions; do not influence or interfere with an election.
- Check with your Judge Advocate General office if you are not certain about a matter dealing with possible political bias.

Chapter 4 - How to Publicize Your Unit

This chapter is designed to provide you with some insight into news media and suggestions on how best to present your unit's story.

You will find sample news releases at the end of the chapter that you can modify to fit your unit's needs. Some words of caution. As you begin to develop your unit's Public Affairs program, do not assume you can create something the news media will accept as news.

Here are some observations about the news media and how you can work with journalists to best tell the story of your unit:

- Reporters are professionals. They value the work they do as a service to the community. They judge what is "news," that is their responsibility. Reporters may be willing to listen to your suggestions and read your submitted stories, but they reserve the right on what to publish or broadcast. Be prepared to hear the answer "no." Don't take their response personally. Ask for their advice on meeting their needs and keep trying!
- The news business is intensely competitive. Don't consider this a problem or obstacle. Take advantage of the competitive marketplace by offering the best you can and allow talented reporters to make the most of your story. Because the marketplace is competitive, many other news sources are working just as hard as you to place their story ideas with reporters. The news space in any newspaper or air time on a broadcast station is limited.
- News organizations have their own bureaucracies, especially in large metropolitan areas. Reporters have first line supervisors who report to managers, who report to owners. Most news organizations are profit-making corporations that must serve their readers, listeners and viewers, and advertisers in order to stay in business. Be aware that reporters you deal with in the field could be very junior in rank, and they do not have complete control over finished products that you see in print or view on television.
- Time is critical to any news organization. This factor cannot be emphasized too strongly.

Find the best path:

When you set out to tell your unit's story to the local media, it is important to find what medium works best to tell a certain type of story. Especially at the local level, hometown weekly or small daily newspapers work best to tell your stories about new recruits, community-based programs or changes of command. Likewise, hometown radio stations, small market television stations and cable television are productive places to present stories about local Guard unit activities.

Social Media:

In today's society, the majority of information is shared through electronic media on social websites like Facebook, Twitter, Youtube, Flickr etc. The Department of Defense recognized social media as a viable form of communication. The critical element of social media is to remember: Once it's out there, it cannot be taken back. Social media is instantaneous and can

reach millions within hours. Chapter 7 provides information about the S.C. National Guard social media presence.

Newspapers:

Publishing varies for dailies and community weeklies.

- **Key individuals** - Smaller papers often have just one or two reporters who cover all news events. Get to know these journalists and work directly with them. At larger daily papers, often one or more reporters will be assigned to cover a military beat. As with their colleagues at a smaller paper, work with these individuals and, when appropriate, their first line supervisors.
- **What works best** - Announcements about new recruits, troops graduating from military schools, promotions, changes of command, new equipment, construction projects and community relations events sponsored by National Guard units, especially those that benefit youth. Realistically, there are no limits to subject matter for newspapers. In cooperation with your full-time state Public Affairs office, consider inviting a reporter from newspapers to report on annual training. Check with your full-time Public Affairs officer before issuing invitations and be prepared to assist with coordination.

Radio:

Radio is fast-paced and short-lived. Remember that radio works best at making announcement-type stories about your unit or an individual. Because radio reporters are limited to a listener's sense of hearing, they work hard at making their stories sound energetic. Reporters also like to vary the kinds of voices by interviewing newsmakers, sometimes "live," but most often with an "actuality" that is recorded on the scene or over the telephone and then edited for broadcast. Although radio station news departments tend to be very small and have limited resources to cover events from the scene.

- **Talk Radio** - Talk radio has developed large and faithful audiences across the country. Seek out the local talk or call-in shows that suit your needs. Choose the program carefully to ensure you will be reaching a worthwhile audience, as some talk show followers come from very narrow interest groups. The person who acts as a spokesperson for your unit must be very knowledgeable about the National Guard and they must be able to keep their cool. Always work in coordination with your full-time state Public Affairs office before you make commitments to appear on a talk radio program.
- **Key Individuals** - A station's news director runs the news operation of a radio station. With the exception of major city stations or ones that feature an all-news format, most radio stations have very small news operations, sometimes the news director is the entire news department. In many states, stations will link together in cooperative networks to share statewide news stories. This can be another outlet for mass distribution of National Guard stories via radio. Get to know how the networks operate in your area to see how they could assist your efforts.

Television:

Television has come to dominate much of the news business with its immediacy and ability to show the emotion of sounds and color pictures. Like the newspaper industry, television markets come in many sizes. You are most likely to have success getting a local National Guard story told on a station from a smaller market than from a major metropolitan area. And like other media, you can count on reporters from nearly any size television station showing up without an invitation when your National Guard unit is involved in a breaking news story - favorable news (responding to a natural disaster) or bad (when there's trouble with personnel, equipment or facilities).

- **New Director** - A station's news director runs the news department. Reporters cover general assignments or might be assigned to the military beat if the station is large enough. Front line supervisors at the news room often are called producers rather than editors.
- **Reporters** – the State Public Affairs office will send out media advisories to invite reporters to high visibility events with the S.C. National Guard. If this is at your unit, be prepared to identify subject matter experts of Soldiers and family willing to share his/ her story.

- **Weekend realities:**

Most hometown National Guard training takes place on weekends when news organizations are thinly staffed. Ironically, while weekend staffs can be small and inexperienced, especially at small-market stations, these same stations often have the most air time to fill with what could be your story!

Story ideas:

Here's a list of events that could take place in your unit. Evaluate where best to offer the story in your community by considering the "what works best" suggestions found in this chapter. Some ideas could be strong enough to offer to all media, others will require tailoring to meet the needs of print or broadcast:

- Deployments and homecomings
- Unique training programs
- Distinguished visitors
- Charitable work by individuals (human interest)
- Programs that benefit the community's youth or elderly
- Major awards and honors, and individual achievements
- Unit open house

Interview hints for the commander and UPAR:

You can successfully communicate with the public and have more positive control of an interview situation with:

- Knowledge of your subject
- Honesty and candor
- Positive attitude
- Use of concise, simple language
- Familiarity with the media

Points to remember:

- You represent the National Guard and the larger active-duty military establishment when you deal with journalists. Always keep your personal views and opinions out of the interview.
- Begin with the attitude that a reporter represents the public, and the public has a right to know about the military.
- Avoid technical language, jargon and military acronyms. Be aware that very few civilian journalists have military experience.
- Put your conclusion into the front of your interview remarks, then expand on the topic.
- Speak in short, effective sentences. Long answers are seldom used in broadcast or print stories. The more you talk, the more chance for saying something that can be misunderstood.
- Stop talking when you've made your points.
- Stay "on the record." Don't say anything outside the interview you wouldn't want to see or hear in the news. Don't agree to respond "on background" or go "off the record" with a reporter.
- Keep your cool when under verbal fire.
- Don't automatically accept a reporter's facts or figures as correct.
- Don't answer hypothetical questions. Generally, these questions begin with "what if?" situations proposed by a reporter.
- If you don't know the answer, say so. Offer to find the answer.

- Never use the phrase "no comment." Explain why you can't answer the question. (Remember matters of security, accuracy, military policy and propriety.)
- Most reporters are generalists. You are the expert on military matters. Do not be timid if you have an opportunity to educate a reporter about military issues.
- Don't try to "snow" a reporter. Be polite, professional and sincere.
- Arrive on time for news media appointments. Talk to reporters about the subject points that are key to the story or that you would like to discuss.
- Prepare for interviews. Know the talking points that you want to make, and remember why you were asked for the interview.
- Establish ground rules and subject matter to be discussed prior to the start of a formal interview.
- Do your homework. Practice talking about the subject with someone who will ask you questions, especially the difficult questions. Even in your specialty, a brush-up is wise.
- Provide reporters with fact sheets that explain the technical specifications of equipment or the organization of your unit. Very few reporters have military experience, so they appreciate fact sheets that help them with nomenclature of equipment and correct spellings.
- If in doubt, ALWAYS call on your full-time state Public Affairs office for assistance.

Public Affairs resources to help you publicize your unit:

Your state National Guard's full-time Public Affairs officer and staff should be able to assist you with the following:

- Provide PA tools (Fact Sheets, briefings, media advisories, talking points) on the SCNG SCIP page. Go to the main page – Command Group- Special Staff- PAO
- Coordinate Public Affairs support for your unit's annual training
- Conduct training for your Unit Public Affairs Representative (UPAR)
- Help you establish a social media presence
- Provide on-site Public Affairs support during an emergency

A National Guard Public Affairs Detachment can provide:

- Support to the state's overall Public Affairs program

- News release support to newspapers, television and radio stations
- Still photo support with digital cameras
- Digital video capturing and editing capability
- On-site assistance during emergencies

Hints for radio or television interviews:

The following suggestions are aimed at broadcast interview appointments. Most of the recommendations also apply to print interview situations, especially when a newspaper photographer will be present:

- Know as much as possible about the subject. Don't guess at an answer or respond to hypothetical questions. If you don't know an answer, say so.
- Be aware of your speed in talking - not too fast, not too slow. Regional accents and dialect add interest to broadcast stories, so don't let this be a barrier to someone being interviewed. At the same time, the interviewee must be able to communicate clearly and effectively.
- Gestures and mannerisms can be very distracting. Be careful what you do with your hands, legs and facial gestures.
- Wear the proper uniform and wear it correctly. If you're in a studio, ASU is likely to be appropriate. If you're in the field, match what the troops are wearing. Be alert that proper safety gear and other uniform items are worn correctly, especially when in a field environment. At the same time, don't interrupt an interview if you notice an unfastened button or something that the civilian audience won't notice as being out of regulation. Use common sense when it comes to uniforms and equipment.
- Rehearse what you want to say with someone who asks you questions, especially the tough ones you might expect.
- Be on time for interview appointments. If you're the guest on a call-in show or other live interview, the station is counting on you to be on their program.

Media lists:

An important tool for a UPAR or unit commander is a listing of news media organizations in the your local area. This list permits quick and reliable contact with newspapers and broadcast stations in your area.

Newspapers & magazines:

Name of Publication	
Mailing Address	
E-mail Address	
Contact's Name/Title	
Telephone	

Television & radio stations:

Call letters	
Network Affiliation	
Mailing Address	
Street Address	
E-mail Address	
Telephone	

CHAPTER 5 – Samples of News Releases

Samples of Unit Level releases: REMINDER: All Hometown news releases MUST be accompanied by DD Form 2266 filled out and signed by the Soldier authorizing release of that information.

1. New enlistment:

UNIT LETTERHEAD

Date

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

For Additional Information, Contact:

Telephone:

_____ (name) of _____ (hometown) was sworn in _____ (day/date) as the newest member of the _____ (state) _____ (Army/Air) National Guard's _____ (unit). _____ (last name) enlisted under a program which pays _____ (describe benefits, such as G.I. Bill). He/she is enrolled at/works at _____ (college or civilian employment, and is studying _____ (college major or career field).

The oath of enlistment was administered by _____ (name of officer). Attending the ceremony were _____ (list any significant guests, such as family members and their relationship to the new soldier/airman).

_____ (last name) will begin _____ (describe training) active-duty training at _____ (duty station) and will be assigned to _____ (describe person's National Guard duties) when he/she returns.

2. Promotion:

UNIT LETTERHEAD

Date

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

For Additional Information, Contact:

Telephone:

_____ (name) of _____ (hometown) has been promoted to the rank of _____ (describe new rank in words such as staff sergeant, not E-6) in _____ (Guard unit).

_____ (last name) has been a member of the _____ (state) Army/Air National Guard for _____ years. The promotion brings a new position, that of _____ (job title), with responsibilities for _____ (explain new duties).

In civilian life, _____ (last name) works at _____ (employer) as a _____ (job title).

3. Award Presentation:

UNIT LETTERHEAD

Date

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

For Additional Information, Contact:

Telephone:

_____ (rank and name) of _____ (hometown), a member of _____ (National Guard unit), received the _____ (certificate or medal) _____ (day/date). The honor was presented to _____ (last name) for _____ (reason for presentation). In civilian life, _____ (last name) is employed by _____ (employer) _____ as a _____ (give title/duties). He/she has been a member of the _____ (state) Army/Air National Guard for _____ (years), and currently is assigned to _____ (unit) as a _____ (describe military duties).

4. Open house:

UNIT LETTERHEAD

Date

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

For Additional Information, Contact:

Telephone:

The _____ (state) Army/Air National Guard's Armory/Base at _____ (street address and city) will conduct a free public open house _____ (date) from _____ (hours of open house).

_____ (rank and name), commander of the _____ (unit), invites everyone to attend. Displays and demonstrations of equipment used by the National Guard, and information about a wide variety of programs sponsored by the _____ (state) National Guard, will be available.

(In the next paragraphs, include a quote or comment from the command or other appropriate person and explain highlights of what will be on display, guest speakers, demonstrations, refreshments, etc. Include information about parking and access to the installation).

Chapter 6 - Photography Tips

Providing local newspapers with good photographs can go a long way toward getting your story into print. Thanks to the technology of point-and-shoot digital cameras and the availability photo editing software, much of the mystery has been removed from taking good photos. But easy-to-use cameras still require some care and practice.

First, a good photograph must meet certain technical standards. To be used in a newspaper or magazine, a photo must be in sharp focus - no exceptions. A blurry or out-of-focus shot is no good and not publishable. Also, since most photos are printed in color, the colors should be rich and vivid.

Second, a photo must have eye appeal. It should grab your attention and the attention of a reporter or editor who makes the decision on whether it is published or not. From the smallest weekly newspaper to a big city daily, all papers want to publish photographs with visual stopping power. Don't settle for second best.

Third, a photo must serve the purpose of illustrating the story you are telling. If your story is about a change of command, a good head and shoulders picture of a new commander illustrates the story, probably much better than a group picture of the unit's senior leadership, or the customary "passing the flag" picture. If your unit has received new equipment, take photos of the equipment in action, not in a parking lot or resting on the armory floor.

Any subject - a person, equipment, or training area - can be photographed in an unlimited number of ways. Each picture will give a different impression of the subject. **Close-ups can be very powerful images.** Taking a photo at an unusual time or day or during stormy weather can add additional impact to a photograph and increase your chances for having it published. Armed with a dependable digital camera, a good photographer needs to develop his or her ability to observe the action and decide how best to tell a story with one or more photographs. Be willing to experiment, be willing to practice, and ask for help from professionals.

Here are more tips:

- For low-cost training, cut a 4"x5" rectangle in the middle of a piece of cardboard that is the size of a sheet of stationery. Look through the opening with one eye to "see" what your finished photo will look like. By shifting the frame back and forth, vertical and horizontal, you can quickly visualize what kind of scene your camera shots will capture.
- Look for informal or unrehearsed scenes. Posed pictures look "posed" and don't have the stopping power that will catch an editor's eye. Since you can't always take pictures without others noticing, spend a few moments with your subjects to put them at ease as much as possible.
- Beware of things in the background of your photos. Is a tree branch or howitzer barrel "growing" out of the back of the head of your subject? And be aware that it is hard to see troops in camouflaged uniforms when they are posed against trees and shrubs

- Take a few moments for a "safety check" of your subjects. Are they in a proper military uniform? Are they working with equipment or weapons in an approved and safe manner? If you must, put things in order before you take the picture.
- Don't crowd a photograph with people or subjects. A flexible limit of four or five people to a shot should be the maximum. And in your finished prints, each person's face should at least be the size of a dime for it to reproduce well in a newspaper.
- **Avoid grip-and-grin photos for newspapers.** They're just fine for scrapbooks, but most editors avoid these photos at all costs. If a person is receiving an award for a job well done, the best photo is a picture of the Soldier or Airman on the job.
- Fill the viewfinder of your camera with the subject you want published in the paper. This means getting as close to the action as is safely possible. When you move in close, take the picture. Then move in closer and take one more.
- Watch the horizon when you are shooting indoors. Unless you are trying to dramatize the action, the horizon should be as level as it is in nature. If the picture isn't straight, it marks you as a beginner and reduces your chances a photo will be published.
- Speed is important. Your photos and articles should be delivered to a newspaper, together, as quickly as possible. The news value of a story and pictures is very perishable. This often means meeting deadlines in hours, not days, and certainly not from one month's training assembly to another. Use e-mail to attach and deliver your products quickly. Photos need to be at least 300 dpi for publication.
- Avoid the temptation to flood a newspaper office with pictures. Don't be skimpy, but send only your very strongest photos. If it is necessary, especially with pictures of equipment or events that a non-military journalist might not understand, include some background information that explains why certain photos are more important than others, but let the editor decide which ones to print.
- **Every photograph must have a caption.** Take extra care to ensure that names are spelled correctly and that equipment or the action in the photo is adequately described.

Chapter 7 – Sharing Command Information

When you have an event or activity you want posted, be sure to send the information to the State Public Affairs Office for posting. The following are links to website used to share the S.C. National Guard Public Affairs products:

www.scguard.com

<http://www.facebook.com/SCGuard>

<http://www.youtube.com/user/SCNationalGuard>

<https://twitter.com/SCNationalGuard>

<http://www.flickr.com/photos/scguard>

<http://www.dvidshub.net/unit/SCNG>

The following are you Points of Contact for the S.C. National Guard Public Affairs Office:

Director Public Affairs LTC Cindi King	(803) 299-4327	cynthia.m.king4.mil@mail.mil
108 th PAD OIC/Media Relations CPT Brian Hare	(803) 299-4309	brian.m.hare2.mil@mail.mil
108 th PAD NCOIC SFC Joseph Cashion	(803) 299-2697	joseph.a.cashion.mil@mail.mil
ComRel/Photojournalist 2LT Tracci Dorgan	(803) 299-4241	tracci.g.dorgan.mil@mail.mil
Photojournalist/Graphics TSgt Jorge Intriago	(803) 299-4118	jorge.intriago@ang.af.mil
Historian SSG Roberto Di Giovine	(803) 299-4328	roberto.digiovine.mil@mail.mil
Social Media/Videographer	(803) 312-4163	david.l.erskine2.mil@mail.mil

Chapter 8 – Open House

Up to now, this handbook has addressed dealing with the news media and your unit personnel and their families. However, these are not the only audiences that have an interest in National Guard activities. They are not the only persons who would be interested in or important to your unit's existence and acceptance in the community. It's important to consider the entire community as your audience, and that includes groups such as civic leaders, employers, other government agencies and citizens in general.

Open House:

An open house at your unit is an excellent way to tell the National Guard story directly to citizens or a select group of individuals you invite. If your unit does not have the capacity to host a public open house, consider conducting a more limited program for the employers of your members.

For any open house event, the key to success is adequate and thorough planning. Allow several month's lead time for planning, and check with your higher headquarters for guidance on regulations and policies that govern what you can do and what funds can be spent to host your guests. Since planning for, setting up and conducting an open house will compete for precious training time, be certain that everyone understands what duty status will cover their participation. You will find that preparation for an open house requires a generous amount of volunteer effort, so you will have to plan accordingly.

Work with local news media to spread the word about a public open house, and don't forget to issue reporters special invitations to attend the event. When you're hosting a boss night for employers, work with your unit members to ensure invitations are issued to appropriate people within that person's civilian workplace chain of command.

Contact your headquarters and full-time Public Affairs office for additional assistance with audio-visual materials and other presentation items that could be used during an open house.

Chapter 9 – Preparing a Subject Matter Expert (SME)

Part of the UPAR mission may involve preparing a spokesperson to address the media. That person must be able to speak in a positive, correct and effective manner and can respond to questions while stating the command's position, understanding PA doctrine, and knowing release guidelines. When prepping a spokesperson, a UPAR should:

- Determine if the spokesperson will address the media in a one-on-one interview dealing with one subject or in an open forum where reporters can ask about anything. Develop a draft script and prepare answers to anticipated questions for the briefer.
- If the topic of the interview involves an extremely complicated or highly technical subject, call on a subject matter expert to help you put the information in understandable terms. In most cases it is better to have the SME as the briefer. If that is not possible, ensure he is at the briefing and at the training session.
- Try to find out who the reporters are and how they handled previous military briefings.
- Establish enforceable procedures/ground rules on what will be covered and how much time will be allowed for questions.
- Determine uniform and protocol requirements.
 - Prepare a draft script to familiarize the briefer with the format of a media briefing and the kinds of questions he will be asked based on the presentation and the current situation.
- Setup: Provide all the materials and equipment at the briefing site. Provide handouts/fact sheets to the media prior to delivering the opening statement.
- Visual aids: prepare handouts/fact sheets for the briefing.

Add cues to the briefing text for visual aids. Ensure you have the proper equipment (video playback, projectors, chalkboards, flip charts, maps, etc.).

Interview Techniques

1) Blocking

- Deftly avoiding the question
- Never say “No comment” or refuse to answer with hostility
- Block only when there is good reason for doing so
- Try to explain briefly why you cannot answer, usually OPSEC
- Bridge to your message

- Stay in your lane!
- Only talk about things in your area of expertise and things of which you have direct knowledge
- “There’s a lot you can talk about without talking about what you can’t talk about!”

2) Bridging allows you to:

- Turn the discussion to your agenda
- “Asked about a problem? Talk about a solution.”
- Present your message and support it

When bridging: block or answer the question briefly, then use a transitional phrase as a bridge to your message. Common bridging phrases are “what I can tell you”, “what you should consider”, “what’s important to realize”, etc.

3) Interview “DO’S”

Be polite but firm

Discuss how you would like to be addressed

Ask the reporters their names and try to break the ice

Use the reporter’s first name instead of “Sir” or “Ma’am”

Respond to hard questions with “bad news” as willingly as you do good news to establish credibility and a good relationship

Take your time: formulate the answer in your mind before speaking

Be brief & concise – 10-20 second responses are the rule of thumb

Try to avoid using large words, military words, jargon, and acronyms – the audience for your interview is the American public

Ignore the camera and talk to the interviewer

Remain in control of the interview

Reasoned (thought out) responses will help you stay in control even if the questions are silly or aggressive.

Always think OPSEC.

If you don't know, say so.

Don't make anything up or speculate.

If you can't talk about something, tell the media why

4) Interview "DON'TS"

Do not participate in an interview that will interfere with your mission

Do not attempt to cover negative events with a cloak of security or secrecy.

Don't offer "off the record" information – you are ALWAYS "on the record"

Never lie – you represent the South Carolina National Guard and your unit

Do not discuss exact numbers or troop strength (Use descriptions like "Light," "Heavy" or "Moderate")

Do not discuss political or foreign policy matters – you don't speak for the President, State Department, Governor or Adjutant General

Don't give the enemy propaganda.

Don't try to answer something OUTSIDE your lane!

Reminders

Control your eyes: Look at the reporter in one-on-one.

Use appropriate nonverbal reactions and facial expressions.

Listen carefully and attentively.

Take off sunglasses and headgear.

Keep it simple but don't talk down.

Usually your audience knows little or nothing about the National Guard. Explain necessary points and make analogies.

Avoid jargon, acronyms and bureaucratic/pretentious language.

No profanity

Chapter 10 – Initial Incident Response

ACCIDENTS AND INCIDENTS

a. Serious accidents or incidents attract considerable media attention or may be of significant interest to internal and external publics. They include, but are not limited to, death or serious injury, potential environmental damage or hazardous-material release (for example, oil and fuel spills), hostage situations and terrorist events, and accidents between military and civilian vehicles or involving aircraft or heavy military equipment. PAOs must decide whether or not an accident or incident is serious.

b. An initial news release should be made within 2 hours (**by JFHQ's PAO, not the UPAR**) after an accident or incident occurs to ease concerns of effected families and personnel and maintain command credibility.

c. The Joint Force Headquarters Public Affairs Office must be notified immediately following any incident that might attract media attention. The UPAR should be ready to represent the unit to the media until a full-time public affairs representative is on the scene. **The UPAR should only confirm to the media that an accident or incident has occurred. UPARs should refer the media to a JFHQs Public Affairs Representative (Pg. 22) for comment.**

d. The following section will help you determine what is and isn't considered a crisis.

CRISIS COMMUNICATIONS

Definition of a crisis: An event that creates or threatens to create a firestorm of harshly negative media coverage that could damage the reputation or future viability of an organization.

Definition of an issue: An external or internal factor – usually lasting over a mid- to long-range time frame – that could represent a serious obstacle to achieving an organization's objectives and cause damage to its reputation if not managed well.

12 Crisis Management Principles

Goal: Establish the command's credibility in dealing responsibly and with compassion during a crisis.

1. Start early to anticipate the possible crises within your command. When deployed, use the commanders CCIR as your starting point to anticipate potential crises. If you accept that "it can happen here", you'll develop a detailed internal plan of what you will do about it. Externally, you'll build a "bank account" of goodwill with your key publics and with the media. Work with key publics and third-party allies by building ongoing relationships (such as office-post neighbors, elected officials, business leaders and community emergency response crews). Educate them on potential issues that may affect them prior to the crisis.

2. Know a crisis when you see one, especially those that can be identified from a distance. A sudden emergency that affects your organization is obviously a crisis. But so is an "issue" as it comes to a boil. It is a good idea to identify potential crises and to have a system for that helps you track their status.

3. Be part of the internal response task force:

Ensure a Crisis Action team is operational with good communication between all sections involved. Have SOPs on hand to speed any actions to be taken.

4. Get and give the facts: Gather information only from highly reliable sources. Coordinate with the necessary offices and provide as many facts as possible, as early as possible, as long as necessary. Don't deal in conjecture or unconfirmed reports. Base decisions only on facts.

5. Know your target publics: The expression "know your customer" applies in a crisis and there are many key communications stakeholders who will want to be informed about the crisis as quickly and as fully as possible. Identify these groups and individuals well before the crisis, and know how to reach them.

6. Work with media and have them work with you: Remember:

- Media inquiries and coverage can cause the incident to become a crisis quickly.
- Sometimes, the media become the crisis.
- Develop no more than 3-5 key, clear messages. These messages must reflect responsibility.
- Help yourself by preparing documents – such as master message points or talking points, questions and answers, and draft fill-in-the-blank releases.
- Identify the central spokesperson and support him or her with an information-gathering team or person.

7. Appearance and tone do matter: Information needs of your publics change as a crisis unfolds as to what types of information releases are required. Depending on the situation, examples of statements of public concerns may include:

- Sympathy - Empathy; Care – Concern
- Doing everything we can for survivors
- Investigating to determine the cause
- Want to avoid any other/further damage
- Want to assure our publics we're doing everything possible to help the survivors and prevent a reoccurrence
- This is what we're doing to avoid this in the future... (specific examples to re-establish credibility)
- Establish hot lines for concerned citizens
- Making information available or posting it on a web site

8. Identify the central spokesperson: Everyone will want to hear from the boss. A crisis requires a spokesperson that is obviously at, or near the levels of power. Ideally, the commander who is responsible for the organization's handling of a crisis will also be articulate and will have had media training for pressure situations. But be sure that whoever speaks for the organization is totally informed of the commander's intent.

9. Mind the emotions/intellect pendulum as a crisis unfolds:

There is a time for "cold, scientific facts" and there are circumstances where they'll just not be heard. Generally, issues can be discussed between groups of professionals. But in public hearings, or in demonstrations, facts often give way to emotions. If you can address a crisis early, as it begins to develop, you'll have a greater opportunity to win with intellectual arguments – and a greater number of alternatives for action.

10. Command the information: Stay ahead of the story by maintaining follow-on press releases, statements, making responders or support network officials available for escorted media interviews.

Be perceived as having nothing to hide without speculating on causes or specifics that may be part of an administrative, criminal or safety investigation.

Understand the media's goals.

Stay tight organizationally, but stay loose tactically. Sometimes a crisis will unfold in ways that can't be predicted. Flexibility is essential and options should be continuously re-examined.

11. Develop third-party allies and alliances:

An outside agency's favorable perception carries much support with all publics. Develop these relationships with elected officials, emergency response planning councils, assistance agencies like the local Red Cross, civilian law enforcement and chambers of commerce well before the crisis situations.

12. Constantly evaluate your messages and their feedback:

- Keep the communications lines open after the crisis. Good communications never really ends. Internally, review what the crisis has taught you about the effectiveness of your crisis communications plan. Externally, you may have to replenish your goodwill "bank account." Opinion research can tell you how well you've weathered a crisis and point the way for your communications between the crises.
- Watch the situation on an hourly or daily basis.
- Maintain contact with your allies and other publics.
- Use clippings, surveys, personal and public meetings, or focus groups to gauge their information needs and perceptions.

Chapter 11 – Social Media Guidance

NGB SOCIAL MEDIA GUIDANCE

See the attached NGB-PA Memo – Social Media Guidance for National Guard Members.

UNIT FACEBOOK PAGES

1. DISCUSS POLICY on UNIT FACEBOOK PAGES
2. Your page needs to be registered with *army.mil*, with information on how to do so on the *Army.mil site>Media>SocialMedia*. Also, for continuity purposes, you may want to post a generic section email on your page as the point of contact for questions about the Facebook page.
3. Form privacy restrictions on what people can post (many units allow fans to post comments, but not photos). Turn off Facebook tracking features that are used to identify every place a user navigates in Facebook for advertising purposes.
4. Security is a primary concern, so get on the same page with your S-2 about Facebook (how often do they inspect the page, etc.). Photos/videos that show aerial views of convoy routes, real-time operations, classified operations, personnel out of regulation, etc. should not be displayed. Remember these basics and consider including them in your page disclaimer:
 - a. Never give exact numbers of troop strength
 - b. Do not discuss future operations or operations occurring in real-time
 - c. Do not give numbers or descriptions of exact weapon/vehicle capabilities
 - d. Post clear guidelines for use on your page (no profanity, nothing offensive, etc.)
 - e. Don't get sloppy – your page represents your command. Spell words and names correctly. Use AP style for rank writing. You can be chatty and less formal, of course, but keep a professional face with good use of language.
 - f. Racist, sexist, homophobic and derogatory comments are not allowed.

User Privacy:

There are account privacy settings for those who have concerns about others viewing their personal information. To address privacy concerns, send out a mass email both advertising your page and giving directions on how users can control their privacy settings. The steps below ensure a person can feel comfortable joining the community while still keeping personal information private.

1. Log into your page, then click on **Account**
2. Go to **Privacy Settings**
3. Then, under **Sharing on Facebook** click **Friends Only**
4. This setting means that the only people who can access the information and photos on your Facebook page are those who you have approved to be **Friends**. This means that if a non-Friend tries to view your page, the person will be blocked and get a message that says your privacy settings do not allow access to people who you haven't **befriended**.
5. Now you are ready to **Like** the page while still maintaining your private page.