

DINFOS Trained Killers:  
The Reach of Military Journalists in American Media

A thesis submitted to Southern Utah University  
In partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of  
Master of Arts in Professional Communication

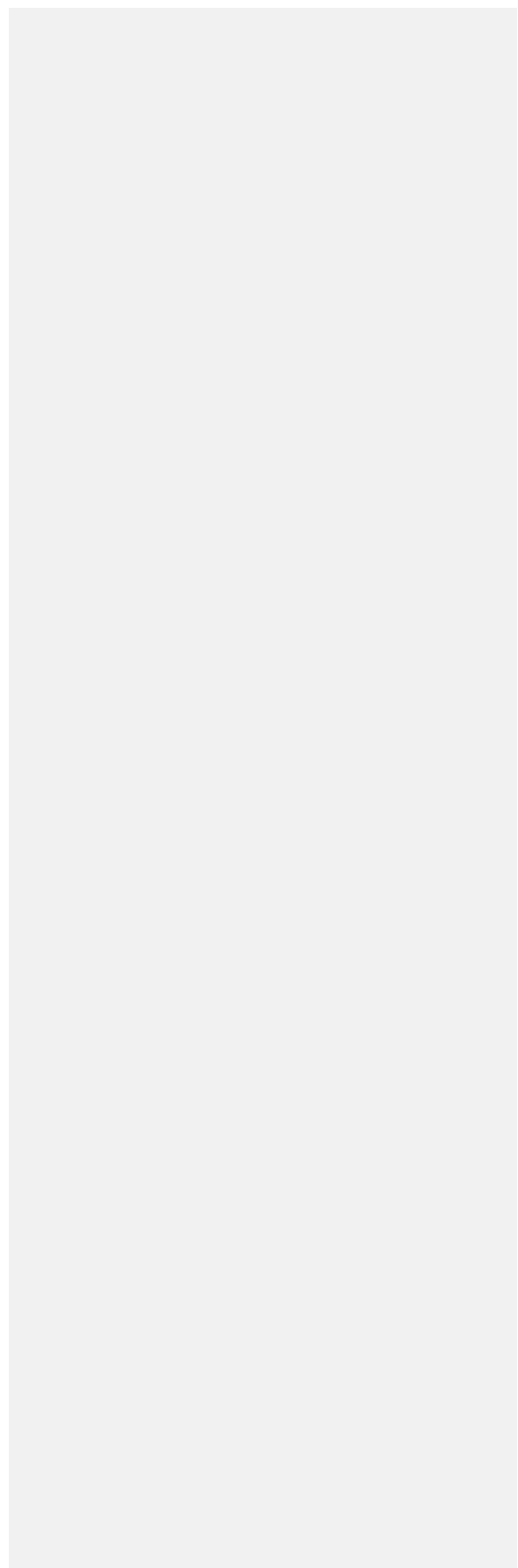
August, 2017

By  
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Chair:  
Kevin Stein, Ph.D.

DINFOS TRAINED KILLERS

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Approval Page

We certify that we have read and viewed this project and that, in our opinion, it is satisfactory in scope and quality as a thesis for the degree of Masters of Arts in Professional Communication.

Capstone Supervisor

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Kevin Stein, Ph.D.

Graduate Director

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Matthew Barton, Ph.D.

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### ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The funny thing about writing a thesis is that when it is finished, the author generally and correctly receives credit for his or her work in completion of the project. In this particular instance, credit for writing the words belongs to me, but acknowledgement to the body of work must go to the tremendous support system which continues to inspire me. I am compelled on a daily basis to write better. To eat better. To work better. To learn better. To love better. To live better. To be better.

To my wife Michelle; it's been a long and winding road. We have grown up side by side. We've laughed, cried, fought, loved and achieved things we only dreamed of a decade and a half ago. Through the hard work, trials and tribulations you have been there. With me, pushing me when I needed it and bringing me back center when I drifted astray. It is because of you that I have been able to strive to accomplish the things I have. You inspire me be my best possible self.

To my oldest son Kayeden; you are the smartest most naturally curious little boy I have ever known. Watching you grow up is both amazing and challenging. Challenging because you are smarter than me; and we both know it. Amazing because I see the potential in you to achieve anything you want. I hope that watching me will inspire you when you are grown to go out and accomplish your dreams. Always keep your curiosity, son. Never stop learning.

To my oldest daughter Madeleine; every single morning I look forward to getting a hug from you. Your love and smile fill my heart with joy. You have such a capacity for love and such a kind heart. You are the rock of our family. Every single day I am amazed at how strong and

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smart you are. I am incredibly proud of the young woman you have become and all the accomplishments you have already achieved.

To my younger daughter Aria; your fierce independence and sweet demeanor makes me smile every single day. There isn't a day that goes by that you don't make me giggle audibly from something you say or do. I love watching you grow and seeing your personality develop. You are a firecracker and incredibly sweet at the same time. You are very much like your mother in that respect.

To my younger son Mason; your endless energy and enthusiasm for everything keeps our entire family moving and on our toes. I have a feeling that as you grow, you will continue to keep us moving and shaking. Never allowing us to become complacent or smug.

To my family; I love you all. Thank you for *loving me* in return. Thank you for inspiring me.

A master's degree requires many moving parts and support. This is no exception. Mentors hold an incredible role and without one specific mentor, I would not be in the position to submit this paper.

I offer specific recognition to Cal Rollins. Cal is a friend, an esteemed mentor and incredible asset to Southern Utah University. When I decided to return to school in 2013, Cal believed in me and gave me an opportunity to shine. Through much determination and incredible

mentorship from Cal, I was able to shine. From awards won and plaques on the wall, to parades and the rebrand of KSUU Thunder 91.1, I had the time of my life at SUU and achieved a dream at the same time. Without an incredible instructor, mentor and friend like Cal, I'm not sure my college experience would have been as fulfilling and great as it was.

For that I am **incredibly grateful.**

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DINFOS Trained Killers:

The reach of Military Journalists in American Media

Timothy L. Beery

Kevin Stein, Ph.D. Thesis Supervisor

### ABSTRACT

The Defense Information School (DINFOS) trains hundreds of military journalists every year. Located at Fort George G. Meade, Maryland, the schoolhouse conducts a thriving learning environment where Soldiers, Sailors, Airmen and Marines learn the craft of journalism in an accelerated and sometimes abbreviated environment. These men and women are promptly deployed to every corner of the globe with a camera – and often a rifle – to tell the story of the American military. “Strength through Truth” is the creed of the American Military Journalist, the DINFOS motto, and is inscribed on the walls at the schoolhouse. DINFOS Students take incredible pride in the accuracy of their reporting. Soldier-journalists are accurate, polished and professional. Their reports are realistic and factual, however, they are directed by the United States Army Public Affairs initiative, and as such limited to a commander’s discretion on what they can release. This study seeks to measure the impact of Soldier-journalists and determine how they are viewed among their peers in the American media.

*Keywords:* Framing, Public Affairs, PAO, government, journalism, Afghanistan, Iraq, Bush, Obama, Trump, Clinton.

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## INTRODUCTION

Army journalists have been on the front lines delivering news and imagery to the home front from every American conflict since World War II. From Normandy to Fallujah, Seoul to Bagram, and Panama to Syria, public affairs soldiers have documented and shared the Army story (Allen & Zelizer, 2004). The Army Public Affairs initiative is a thriving and ever-growing governmental entity (DOD, 2008) and as such, training for Army journalists is developing and ever changing to keep pace with a technological world. Before World War II, war correspondence was mainly accomplished through the civilian media, but with ever expanding wartime operations and an increasing appetite for war coverage, the U.S. Army established the Army Information School in 1946 at Carlisle Barracks, PA.

Shortly after the Army Information School was established, other services followed suit with the Air Force establishing a public information school at Craig Air Force Base, and the Navy doing the same at Great Lakes Training Center, respectively (Defense Information School, 2017). In 1961, Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara led a renewed effort to establish a joint-service all-encompassing school for aspiring military journalists, and on February 1, 1964 a charter was established for the Defense Information School. In 1965 the schoolhouse moved to Fort Benjamin Harrison, IN where it existed until 1995 when it moved to its current location at Fort George G. Meade, MD.

DINFOS retains a national accreditation through the Council on Occupational Education (COE). The school is also reviewed annually by the American Council on Education (ACE) for college credit recommendations. Because of these certifications, many universities recognize transfer credits from DINFOS and students who attend the university are able to parlay their experience in the schoolhouse into their academic ambitions and careers. Students at DINFOS

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learn imagery techniques including photography, videography, basic writing and announcing skills and public speaking. They also study a very robust Public Affairs curriculum which trains them to be ambassadors of the Department of Defense.

### BACKGROUND

In 2008, I joined the United States Army as a broadcast journalist. In June of that year, I shipped to basic combat training at Fort Jackson, SC. After 12 weeks of mud, fire ants, explosives, and exquisitely folded hospital corners, I graduated basic training and shipped off to Fort Meade to begin school at DINFOS. From September to January I attended school Monday through Friday from 8 am – 5 pm in an intensive and pressure-filled academic environment. The subject matter was clear and concise, however, there was zero margin for error. The government-run school is in the business of churning out soldier-journalists and there is no shortage of applicants. Over 2,400 Soldiers, Sailors, Airmen and Marines graduate the Defense Information School each year and with limited classrooms and instructors, they simply don't have time for repeat soldiers.

While at the school, I gained a tremendous base in communications and developed my skills as a journalist and videographer. I learned how to shoot and edit compelling video and write stories and press releases. I gained a knowledge of the mechanics of cameras and an appreciation for the AP Stylebook. DINFOS taught me how to be a journalist. They taught me how to write and they taught me how to run a radio station and produce. It also gave me the confidence to ask the right questions and know how to conduct interviews. I left the schoolhouse with the confidence to speak in front of people.

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**Commented [TB16R15]:** Thank you, it's certainly easier when you are passionate about a subject.

Within a year and a half of walking out of the doors at Fort Meade, I found myself in Eastern Afghanistan as a combat correspondent with the 34<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division, U.S. Army National Guard. I was a wartime reporter, reporting on America's longest war and embedding with infantry soldiers – “in the suck”- as it is said. That was the exciting part of my job. Being in a combat zone, knowing my life was at risk every time I went out of the base had a quality of excitement that is difficult to quantify. Knowing you are in a war zone and feeling the adrenaline when you are on patrol is intoxicating. It's both fun and stressful at the same time.

There's a level of knowledge preparing for a mission that a combat correspondent goes through. For me, I was looking at the full breadth of the mission, envisioning my story, and determining how I would tell it. Often as a soldier-journalist I faced restrictions on what I could report and how I could present information. This shaped and framed my stories to fall under a certain veil. This was a frustration for me; I loved being with soldiers, I loved being a soldier, but often I bristled at the officers and non-commissioned officers who ran my public affairs shop and directed how I could tell my stories.

Public Affairs and journalism are different disciplines. They share the same skill set, but there are fundamental differences between the two crafts (Gottesman, 2017). Public Affairs is the government equivalent to Public Relations in the civilian world. A public relations employee has the task to tell their story from the view point of their company or employer. Their goal is to paint the best possible picture of their subject to gain the approval of the general public. Army journalists tell the Army story, however they also have Public Affairs responsibilities and as such, they have to answer to a commanding officer for discretion on what they can publish. Journalism in its purest form is giving information from those who have it to those who don't.

The Public Affairs Specialist/Army Journalist doesn't always have that complete freedom. He or she has to keep the needs of the Army in mind and tailor messages which support them. This meant that as a war correspondent, I wasn't tasked with telling the world about the crazy things I saw as I embedded with infantry patrols, but rather it was my job to explain to the world how US Soldiers were working "shoulder to shoulder" with Afghan National Army troops. I witnessed the alleged teamwork that the Army directed me to inform the public with, and while it was there, it was not the overwhelming theme during our patrols. Afghans were not "in the lead" as it were. I hated framing every story as if they were.

That didn't stop me from doing my job, and following a year-long tour through Camp Shelby, MS, Fort Irwin, CA and eastern Afghanistan I returned to the United States boasting a large portfolio of very bland work. Despite the experience of deployment, which was tremendous, much of my work was very general and did not stand out. From my deployment, I felt that I learned much, much more than I was able to demonstrate in my portfolio. I returned from deployment with confidence and the knowledge to make it in the journalism field, yet I experienced trouble finding work. I had not graduated from college at the time and I found that I couldn't even get a call back from news outlets based off my reel alone. I had the experience of running and hosting an afternoon radio show in Afghanistan and yet in the states I was looked at as less than an intern. I had shot and produced nearly 100 stories out in the field, and despite it all, I couldn't get a television station to even look at my work.

In the fall of 2012 while escorting a member of local media around at the Utah National Guard Governor's Day event at Westlake High School in Saratoga Springs, UT, I asked him what I could do to get looked at by local stations, and he gently explained to me that as a military public affairs specialist I was looked at as essentially a "dumb grunt." He informed me that I

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needed to expand my capabilities and reporting style. It was implied that as an Army journalist, I couldn't have known how to be an objective reporter and that I was just a propaganda specialist. He informed me that only reporting from the point of view of the Army would actually hurt me as a journalist as I wasn't an objective observer. He also asked if I had ever done any other journalism and had something I could show, which at the time, I could not. He told me that I was basically a "one trick pony" and if I wanted to be noticed in his field I had to produce other things. It was clear to me that in the mind of the professional, I was little more than a propaganda specialist, issued a camera, and trained to frame the messages of a government force. |

### Theory

Framing Theory is based on the media's ability to take information at hand and determine what will be reported and the manner in which the reporting is accomplished (Lippman, 1922). The news media has the power to determine what the public sees and the manner in which they see it. They cannot control what the public thinks, but can directly influence the manner in which the public receives information. Framing is common in political circles and varies tremendously from one news outlet to another (Entman, 2007). A single story can vary substantially simply based upon the manner in which it is told. It has been said that the world is perceived through stereotypes that serve as pictures in our heads (Lippmann, 1922).

In the years since 9/11, war coverage in the United States has expanded and changed as conflicts have developed. Frames that were accepted by the media from government officials in the early days of the war as solid information became questioned and discarded as the conflicts wore on (Glazier & Boydston, 2012). The United States Department of Defense has a thriving Public Affairs Initiative regarding information concerning DoD operations (DOD, 2008). It has been observed that the military public affairs agenda has not always been consistent with the

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Commented [TB25R24]: Noted. Thank you.

actual events in war theatres dating back from World War II all the way to Operation Enduring Freedom in Afghanistan (Allen & Zelizer, 2004). Within the last 15 years this phenomenon has seemingly been exacerbated within operations centered in Iraq and Afghanistan.

This study tests the presence of framing in military journalism. It also measures the attitudes of communications professionals regarding military journalists. It deems to determine if “DINFOS Trained Killers” are taken seriously by their peers and respected as members of the communication professions. Does military framing take away, or add credence to the title “military journalist”?

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### Literature Review

Framing theory was introduced in *Public Opinion* in the early part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century (Lippman, 1922). Lippmann said, “The world is imagined determines at any particular moment what men will do.” Entman (P. 163-173, 2007) expanded upon this notion of perception by applying it to political and media bias. He discusses framing and agenda setting and their application to politics, presidential elections, foreign policy and ultimately the slant on the media they create. Schwalbe (2006) looks at the slant applied to the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan in the early years. She took note of the early framing of the Iraq war. During the early years, the U.S. media painted the war in a patriotic light that was in opposition to many comments and opinions shared regarding the war in traditional media at the time, and in the years since has been lamented and dissected on web and social media platforms. The patriotic view comes in direct support of military and government public agendas that look to paint operations in a positive light toward the American taxpayer.

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Schwalbe is not the only author to discuss patriotic framing of the war during the initial invasion of Afghanistan. Edy & Meirick (2007) cited the early remarks in President George W.

Bush's initial address following the 9/11 attacks as the basis for framing a justification to enter Afghanistan in 2001. The remarks made by Bush justified his focus on Taliban leadership by placing them alongside the perpetrators in the attacks. Bush said the Taliban was "committing murder" by offering those responsible for the attacks aid within Afghanistan. The Bush administration was able to use framing in the media to garner support for a war effort, and on October 7, 2001 launched airstrikes into Afghanistan.

Bush is not the only U.S. President to use framing to develop a media message to garner wartime support. President Barack Obama framed the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan through speeches to promote domestic security and end combat operations in each respective theatre (Fucilla & Engbers, 2015). Messages of battlefield successes (Biddle, 2013) justified the President to enact a timeline to end the conflict even though evidence did not support his timeline for a successful withdrawal from Afghanistan.

A hasty exit from the country would sour the President's approval ratings as well as the reputation of the United States, but continuing to fund a seemingly endless war effort would provide the same result. Pushing a message of security in Afghanistan and that nation's ability to carry its own weight demonstrated to the American public that the U.S. could withdraw from Afghanistan responsibly.

Framing messages regarding American operations in Iraq and Afghanistan from government sources such as military public affairs has had an impact on how the American media has portrayed the conflicts in all stages. In the earlier years it helped to drum support for operations and in the latter years framing a message of stability ensured a viable exit strategy. With media having an ever larger presence on the battlefield, framing by government officials has diminished some, as media has become privy to the situation in the country (Biddle, 2013).

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Obama determined 2014 as a critical year to withdraw in a combat role in Afghanistan citing strong national security in that nation as well as incentive for the people there to hold elections and vote for a new leader (Obama, 2014). Elections did happen in Afghanistan, but they were anything but stable (Avnl, 2014). The message from the American government did not match the reality in Afghanistan.

Media framing is not a new phenomenon, Lippmann drew attention to it first in the 1920's. It consistently happens between government officials and the American public. The message is framed to meet the agenda (Edy & Meirick, 2007). The wars in Iraq and Afghanistan have been no different. In the beginning President Bush's remarks framed the message to support the full scale invasion of two respective countries. In the latter days, President Obama's remarks regarding the withdrawal of troops contrasted heavily with the Newsweek report of the situation on the ground. His message was crafted to support the withdrawal agenda. The presidential message of Afghan autonomy and independence painted a different image than what observers on the ground were reporting.

Military journalists and public affairs specialists carried out and executed the messaging regarding the exit from both Iraq and Afghanistan. On paper (Tooreon, 2016), these two wars are officially over, yet it is known that troops remain on the ground in both countries. It is no secret that objectives set forth in 2001 have yet to be achieved. Military journalists and public affairs specialists have the unenviable task of keeping the public informed on operations in Iraq, Afghanistan, Syria, and countless other locations such as the Korean Peninsula, to which the military has deployed troops.

It should be determined how much the American media trusts and respects military journalists. Knowing what journalists take from their military counterparts as fact, and what their

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attitudes toward government sources are will help determine the role of public affairs in the communications world. Perspectives of communications professionals regarding military journalism and public affairs can answer the question of how well regarded military journalism is, and how well the skills of public affairs soldiers are respected among their peers. Are military journalists truly *one trick ponies* or is the broad skillset taught by DINFOS recognized in the industry as cutting edge? Was my situation with struggling to find work an anomaly, or do communications professionals truly hold a lack of respect for military journalists?

### Rationale and Research Questions

Since 2001, the government has had a specific agenda regarding messages concerning Afghanistan, Iraq, U.S. Forces and security within the regions (Shepherd, 2006). Civilian reporters in the war efforts do not have to follow Department of Defense guidelines in reporting, but they do rely on the U.S. Military often for embedding and imagery. Military reports are often sterilized in a certain manner, considering the needs of the American Force and the discretion of the commander. This study seeks to find out if military framing impacts the opinions of civilian journalists regarding their military counterparts, and if so, how those opinions effect the ability of military journalist to seek employment in the civilian world. It also will determine the level to which in which military journalists are respected among their peers in the civilian professional world.

**RQ 1:** How is the training military journalists complete viewed and valued in the civilian world

**RQ 2:** What are media professionals' attitudes toward military journalists and how much do they trust them?

### Methods

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A series of qualitative interviews was conducted with communications professionals across the two communications disciplines of journalism and public relations. The questions were formulated to answer the main research questions and determine how military journalists are viewed among their peers, as well as measure how well known DINFOS and military journalism training is in the civilian world. The scripted questions are listed in Appendix 1 of this paper and the recruitment letter is in Appendix 3. Each of the interviews is contained in sequence in Appendix 4. It was the goal for each interview to become a free flowing conversation with the answers given by the interview subjects to be combined into a narrative which could be used in turn, to answer the research questions and determine how military journalists are viewed among their peers.

Desired interview candidates were all working professionals in the communication disciplines with varying levels of experience and tremendously different backgrounds. There was no credence given to number of years in the field, but it was determined that at least one interview candidate should be a senior in his or her field. This candidate was desired to hold an executive position within their organization and with that position, he or she should boast multiple decades of experience. It was also determined that a “rookie” should be incorporated, someone recently new to the profession, possibly straight out of school or freshly graduated. Invitations were sent via text, Facebook, email, Twitter, and LinkedIn to over 30 active working communications professionals across the Midwest and Western United States. Interviews were conducted through email, over the phone and in face-to-face conversations, the dates of each annotated in Appendix 4. It was stated in the recruitment letter that the interviews seek to learn the perspectives of communications professionals regarding military journalism, and that 30 minutes of their time was desired to answer ten questions which would be used to collect

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responses. Some of the interviews went shorter than 30 minutes and some of them developed into deeper conversations and took well over an hour to complete.

The first interview took place via phone call, Wednesday July 20, 2017 in Salt Lake City, UT. Bree Burkitt, a reporter with the Cedar City Daily News was initially contacted through Twitter and she responded with her phone number and said she would be honored to participate in the discussion, though she said she didn't have much knowledge on the subject matter. A phone call was scheduled, and dialed from Salt Lake City to Cedar City, where Burkitt resided at the time. The conversation with her centered on her experiences at The Daily News, a position I previously held, and the challenges of being the only reporter in Cedar City. Burkitt began her career in journalism as an intern in Washington D.C where she worked with a military PAO. She then moved on to the Arizona Daily Sun in Flagstaff, AZ where she worked for a number of years as a reporter before accepting her current position as the chief news reporter for The Spectrum and Daily News in Cedar City. Burkitt boasts nearly a decade of newsroom experience in multiple states and capacities.

The next interview took place immediately after Burkitt's call ended. Shawn Denevan, the manager of KXDS FM radio at Dixie State University, was contacted initially via Facebook Messenger. Denevan was helpful and willing to participate, though like Burkitt, he warned that he had a very limited knowledge of the subject matter. Through some back and forth dialogue, it was communicated to him that a limited scope regarding military journalism would not have a negative impact on the study, considering the objective of the study was to learn how military journalists are viewed, and his perspectives – while limited – would be valuable data. He agreed to a call and the two of us spoke for well over thirty minutes about the topic at hand, personal biases, both relating to the topic and to other things, and about the state of college radio in

**Commented [KAS41]:** This is a delicate structure here, but I think you're doing it correctly. You are free to introduce your interview participants and their backgrounds in the methods section as long as you save the themes generated until the analysis section.

**Commented [KAS42]:** Former student of mine. He's a pretty funny guy 😊

Southern Utah. Denevan has worked in the radio industry for 25 years, dating back to his high school days. He has performed at every single position that can be found in an FM station, from music director, to program director, to morning show host and evening drive talent.

Matthew Jacobson of St. George, UT was the third interview completed. Jacobson is the content strategist at The Spectrum and Daily News in St. George where he started in 2013 as a copy editor fresh out of college. He was initially contacted through LinkedIn and immediately agreed to offer his thoughts and perspectives to the study. A phone call was coordinated and he was contacted via telephone July 20, 2017. Jacobson spoke of his experiences with military sources via the AP wire and expressed a strong conviction in support of the free press and the role of the journalist in maintaining a press free of corruption and oppression.

The next day a written interview from Haven Scott was received and transcribed. Scott is a relative newcomer to the journalism field. He wrote for his high school paper in the 1990s, but took a long break from the field until his decision to return to college in 2009. He worked at the University Journal at Southern Utah University and as a camera person at athletic events until being hired as the personality reporter for the Cedar City Daily News in 2015. He worked as a reporter, covering a myriad of topics for the Daily News until a corporate downsizing resulted in him being laid off in 2017. Scott discussed, in detail, experiences with military PAOs from both Nellis Air Force Base in Las Vegas, NV and Kirtland Proving Ground in New Mexico. Scott has since been released from his duty at the Daily News, due to a reduction in the work force. He now works at Southern Utah University as a Graduate Student.

The next set of interviews was a 4-way conversation with the central communications team at the Utah Department of Transportation at their office located in the Calvin Rampton Complex at 4501 S. 2700 W. in Taylorsville, UT. The conversation included Joseph Walker,

**Commented [KAS43]:** I went to High School with Haven. We wrote for the Cedar High paper together. He's also been in a couple of my classes at SUU. I bet it's weird for him, but I quite enjoy having him in class.

**Commented [TB44R43]:** He's mentioned that to me before. I loved working with him at The Spectrum. One of my best friends in Cedar City.

John Gleason and Zach Whitney. Walker is the Director of Communications at UDOT and is the senior most communications member of the staff. He reports directly to UDOT Director Carlos Braceras and oversees all communications efforts statewide. Walker has worked in communications for over 40 years with assignments at various corporations such as Geneva Steel, the LDS Church and the Deseret News. He came to UDOT following a lengthy career as a public information consultant. Gleason is the Public Information Officer for the department. His duties include being on call 24-7 as the face and voice of UDOT. Gleason prepares press briefings, and coordinates responses to media requests while often providing soundbites and quotes for media stories. Gleason came to UDOT following a career in television where he worked in local news, and an additional period where he produced the Jerry Springer show in Chicago, IL. Whitney came to UDOT from Fox 13 news in Utah where he served as a reporter in Salt Lake City, before being re-assigned to open up a news bureau in St. George, UT. During his time in St. George, Whitney wrote, shot, and produced news stories covering the geographical area between Richfield and St. George. Following his stint at Fox 13, Whitney now runs all social media platforms for UDOT and works as a video producer and digital content creator. The conversation with the UDOT staff touched on many topics and gained significant data in answering questions about how military journalists are viewed among a group of professionals with varying degrees of experience and responsibilities.

David DeMille of St. George, UT followed the conversation at the UDOT offices. DeMille is the local government and political reporter for The Spectrum in St. George. He was initially contacted through Twitter and was willing to share his experiences. He has been at The Spectrum for around 9 years, and before that he worked for newspapers in Southern California

and Northern Utah. DeMille discussed his experiences working directly with military PAOs and shared observations about where he sees them succeeding.

The final interview came via email. Randy “Charlie Sherpa” Brown is a freelance writer and editor who has worked for multiple publications across Central Iowa. Brown graduated with a journalism degree from Drake University in 1990 and has spent the last 27 years directly involved in communication in one form or another. Brown has a long and detailed history with military public affairs and has experience both in uniform and as a civilian working with them and with members of the media. In 2011, Brown traveled to Eastern Afghanistan and embedded with the 34<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division as a reporter for two weeks where he worked in close quarters with the public affairs shop to help tell the story of the brigade in the largest Iowa Army National Guard Deployment since World War II.

Each conversation contained the ten interview questions, which were approved by the thesis supervisor and IRB at Southern Utah University. Participants were notified that their comments were to be used as data in this study and they were informed that they were being recorded. Participants were notified that they had the option of remaining anonymous and no participants in this study were compensated in any way for their time. Interviews were recorded on a Tascam voice recorder, and the conversations were transcoded (Appendix 4). All comments, perspectives, and opinions shared in this thesis are taken from the aforementioned appendix.

### Analysis

#### Impressions within the industry

Military journalism is simply not very well known outside of the military influence and government agencies. Public Affairs specialists are relied upon when reporters have a very specific need for their product, but even then they do not always leave a lasting

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Commented [KAS47]: Say a little more about this. I can't help, but wonder how you recorded the phone calls.

Commented [TB48R47]: I added details on how they were recorded

Commented [KAS49]: Ok, I do see that this is in fact the analysis. It's just mislabeled a little. You have three common themes you are addressing: impression within the industry, military journalist skills, and likelihood to hire. These are fine, but I'm a little surprised that not more came out of so many lengthy interviews.

impression. “There are bases such as Nellis Air Force Base in Las Vegas that have public affairs specialists who take weeks to get back to you, and there are places like Kirtland in New Mexico who get back to you the same day” (H. Scott, personal communication July 21, 2017).

When a PAO was needed at Nellis Air Force Base, help was not swift or current. The idea of military journalism is well-respected if not completely known and acknowledged, multiple reporters and communications professionals admitted to having very limited knowledge of their military counterparts. The concept of military journalists being unreliable is not a common theme among working professionals though. Haven Scott professed that while the PAO at Nellis Air Force Base was unreliable and unprofessional, a counterpart at Kirtland Proving ground was just the opposite and helped him the same day.

Reliability, or at least the perception of reliability remains strong suit for military journalists in the civilian world. Military stereotypes of punctuality and strong technical skills (D. DeMille, personal communication July 21, 2017) are prevalent among journalists and public relations employees alike. Respect is a common theme regarding military, and stereotypically, many people interviewed for this study found a deep level of respect for the military in general. Respect for the uniform doesn't always equal respect for the individual wearing it, however. Personal experiences around those in uniform can and do greatly impact how personal biases shape perspectives. *“Now you are entering the realm of personal bias. I don't speak it much, because it often is not received well. I do have a personal bias against members of the military based on multiple interactions. It's rare to find a humble member of the military service. I find that especially since 9/11 everyone has jumped on the patriotism bandwagon and I've had a number of personal experiences with students that are in military uniforms that use their service to get as much as they can for free. Whether that is girls, or food, they are basically milking the*

*system for what it's worth under the guise of 'I'm a military guy, look at me, you want me!' That doesn't sit well with me. I've seen a guy in his complete dress blues cheat on a test multiple times in my classroom. It's a situation where there is always a few bad apples in every bunch, but I've seen more and more members of the military not act as they should. It's kind of like our president. It's like, 'hey we have a president, but he doesn't act presidential'.* Perspective plays a massive role in hiring help in the communications world and negative stereotypes regarding the military have nearly as large of an impact as positive ones do (S. Denevan, personal communication, July 20, 2017).

The work produced by military journalists is well respected – albeit rarely used. Military reports for AP Wire services and seen on networks such as CNN carry significant weight in the newsroom (M. Jacobson, personal communication, July 20, 2017). Reporters rely on military sources when their needs reflect it (D. DeMille) and public information professionals rely on military PAOs when their area of work encroaches upon military installations (J. Walker, personal communication, July 21, 2017). They are viewed as dependable and trustworthy when they are needed to those with knowledge, alas they are not well known within the field (B. Burkitt, personal communication, July 20, 2017).

**Commented [KAS50]:** Ok, we need to blow up this section a bit more. I like that you are integrating what you found in your interviews, but you really only give one sentence to each interviewee and it's paraphrased. It's always better to have direct quotes to give color to your interviews. However, if you didn't record them (which some qualitative researchers choose not to), you would have at least taken some pretty extensive notes and can use those to paint a detailed picture here.

**Commented [TB51R50]:** I added the specific quote from Denevan that I was referencing

### Military Journalist Skills

The Defense Information School may be one of the least well known COE Accredited and ACE Recommended learning institutions in the country. Not many journalists without close ties to the military have heard of the school. Many had no idea it existed and asked what kind of training the schoolhouse offers. When it was explained how DINFOS operates and the types of curriculum, many were impressed and some even offered feelings of jealousy for not having the chance to learn at the school (B. Burkitt). Those with a knowledge of the school professed to its challenges and mentioned how impressive the curriculum is (J. Walker).

It is commonly acknowledged among the group sampled that military journalists possess the needed skills to make it in the profession and some even opine that military journalists hold abilities above the typical journalist (M. Jacobson). Skills are well respected and field experience is held at a premium. Time reporting in far off lands is well thought of and for many professionals experience in the field weighs far more than college.

*"You don't learn anything in journalism school,"*

(B. Burkitt, persona communication, July 20, 2017).

*"I don't feel like I learned anything in college,"*

(Z. Whitney, personal communication, July 21, 2017).

In the communications professions, field experience is king. Reporters learn while they are on the job (H. Scott) and many, if not most, do not feel like journalism school and college prepared them adequately for the things they experience on a daily basis in their field. College is not completely dismissed, however (S. Denevan) and some look at an education as a noteworthy

Commented [KAS52]: Good, you've got some direct excerpts here.



achievement that proves the merit of an individual (J. Gleason, personal communication, July 21, 2017). Generally, military skills are well respected within the industry, and those with a knowledge of DINFOS have a high opinion of the school, (R. Brown, personal communication, July 29, 2017) with some placing it on par or higher than their journalism degree.

### **Likelihood to hire a Military Journalist**

*“I might be kind of biased in this aspect because I have a lot of friends who have served in the military, or National Guard, and I have nothing but the highest respect for them. So if it was me hiring, I would probably hire a military journalist first. Not only out of respect for their service, but because one could be assured that they could handle what we “unmilitary” people would consider stressful.”* (H. Scott, personal communication, July 21, 2017)

*“The technical skills would likely be a real plus. Military experience often comes with some other expertise which might be useful. That could be some specific mechanical skill or knowledge of a specific part of the world or specific culture. However I would say that hiring on a generality would be difficult. It’s probably best to say that military service shouldn’t discourage a company from making a hire. At the end of the day I think you have to look at an applicant on his or her merits”* (D. Demille, personal communication, July 21, 2017)

Some reporters take deep concern with the notion of military journalists struggling to find work such as Scott and Demille, while other professionals mentioned personal bias possibly inhibiting “their intentions of hiring someone who boasts military service on a resumé (S. Denevan).

*“The work that they (military journalists) has to show and that’s the bottom line. Whether journalists are military or not, I think they have to prove that they can do the job. I think when*

*you put military service on a resumé it's similar to putting that you are a returned Mormon missionary on a resumé. Some people would be like 'oh you're hired!' and others would be like 'I hate Mormons, you're not hired'. It all plays into discrimination and biases toward whomever and whatever. Again the bottom line is that the military journalist needs to do the same thing as any other journalist and be able to have a portfolio of work and a resumé of dedication and quality work” (S. Denevan, personal communication, July 21, 2017)*

There are two sides to every issue, however and while some journalists may share jaded views of service due to negative experience, others stated that biases may influence them to hire someone specifically because of military service.

*“If they both have the same qualifications and this military journalist had this great portfolio of amazing things that he or she has done out in the field, versus someone who maybe has just kind of been around town and has been reporting on city council meetings, I would definitely take the military journalist just because the expertise that he or she would bring to the table would be tremendous” (M. Jacobson, personal communication, July 20, 2017)*

*“If I am hiring a candidate here, at UDOT, then military experience is a great asset. We have many of the same limitations here as military journalists and that government experience goes a long way here. We have lots of the same kind of bosses and we are trying to do the same kinds of things. So if we are hiring someone here I think that is a real added benefit”*

(J. Walker, personal communication, July 21, 2017)

Military journalists make strong candidates in the communication disciplines due to the base of technical skills taught by both DINFOS as well as serving in the field (D. DeMille) and their experience in hostile environments and high stress situations parlays nicely into local journalism (M. Jacobson). Some organizations protect Veteran status (R. Brown), while others have policies specific to veterans. This can and often does play a role in the hiring of military journalists. Other factors play a role as well, and often hiring veterans goes well beyond the measure of their physical skills.

*“I would say that hiring on a generality would be difficult. It’s probably best to say that military service shouldn’t discourage a company from making a hire. At the end of the day I think you have to look at an applicant on his or her merits”*  
(D. Demille)

Generally among the group of professionals surveyed for this study, military journalists are looked upon positively as potential job candidates within the various communication disciplines, so long as their product is high quality. Nearly every interview subject emphasized numerous times that the most important aspect to hiring staff is the portfolio. When professionals in communication are looking for staff, they just do not care about credentials – they want to see product. Communication is all about the deliverables, and military journalists better provide the deliverables if they intend to work in in the field following their days in uniform.

**Commented [KAS53]:** My comments on the analysis are really the same for each of the three sections:  
1) Three themes is a bit surprising for the amount of interviews and the length of the conversations.  
2) The comments from the participants need better development in the form of more detailed paraphrases or direct excerpts. I assume you thought since you included the whole interviews in the appendix that you didn’t need to integrate them here, but you do. It’s part of painting a narrative in the actual paper itself. Remember, qualitative research is making an argument. You make an argument with your words and evidence. So, make a claim about what the interviews reveal and then support them with examples.

**Commented [TB54R53]:** I’ve altered this section and added the quotes I was referring to in the original draft

### **Conclusion**

Military journalists carry a certain prestige among their peers within the chosen field of communication, however it is a prestige of mysteriousness. Simply put, there isn't a lot of buzz about military public affairs. The idea of military is so old, and institutionalized that the thought of journalists and publicists in uniform just isn't a common notion. It is taken for granted that military imagery can and does show up in the wire services (M. Jacobson), and most of the time imagery isn't credited with a name, but rather U.S. Army or U.S. Navy. Due to the nature of military journalism being free from copyright (R. Brown), individual product is credited to the branch of service with no thought given to the highly trained journalist who acquired it.

It's this public domain nature that puts the onus on the soldier-journalist, sailor-photographer and/or airman-publicist to ensure that he or she develops a strong reel and portfolio. The military pays thousands of journalists to train, develop, and enhance their skills and a huge part of doing so involves developing a portfolio. If military journalists wish to pursue a lasting career in the communication disciplines, they simply must build their skills, and think outside the box to enhance their capabilities. There isn't a better learning environment than being thrust into a real-world situation and having to sink or swim. Learning to not only keep with the current, but expand and push past the current can and will set military journalists apart as they serve their contracts.

Countless former military journalists work in capacities across the country, and yet the DINFOS fraternity is relatively small. For an esteemed organization, it seems the school should be marketed more heavily. Perhaps this could be a recruiting task with the services. There are restrictions on who can serve in the military as a journalist, there are limits with entrance exam scores, as well as limited PAO positions within the services, regardless, it seems the school could

do a better job getting its name out among journalism scholars. The education offered at DINFOS is top notch and if more people knew the quality of training, it seems the quality of the school would only increase

Public domain publishing and lack of school marketing aside; military journalists must sell themselves if they wish to be noticed. The communication industry is very competitive and with the current state of media, scoops are produced 24/7/365. There is always a story and the journalist who can tell the story the best will get the scoop. DINFOS trained killers have the skills, they have the foundation and they have the opportunity to produce. The test is *what* they can produce.

It was mentioned earlier in the background section that I produced a large portfolio of bland work while deployed in Afghanistan. While I was there, I kept my reporting limited to the techniques taught to me at the school and I followed my public affairs guidance to produce “command information”. This didn’t allow for unconventional or “outside the box” thinking. I had a large portfolio, but it wasn’t vast and it wasn’t diverse. Some of this could be attributed to having rules I adhered to, but much of it was simply me not taking risks with my coverage. In framing my reports, I followed the rules, and did what the company asked of me. I also took no risk, because I framed the message. My reports were 100 percent accurate, but journalism is not just about being accurate. It is about being accurate and telling the whole story. My framed content as a combat correspondent with the 34<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division was not a complete portrayal of what was happening in the country. A journalist who frames his or her content either plays it safe, as I did, or takes a significant risk with the coverage.

I believe it is a fair statement to say that a journalist who plays it safe will never get to the top of his or her field. Shaking things up, stepping outside the box – which ever cliché is

preferred – is how to develop your skills and build your portfolio. As a military journalist I had opportunities to do just that, while keeping within my rules and in hindsight I should have done more.

Every single person interviewed said experience and portfolio were top priority in their field, the matter material reported doesn't concern professionals as much as the quality of the content. This means that known military framing doesn't have a significant impact on the views of military journalists. When a story has been framed, it is looked at as the journalist simply "doing their job". Prospective hiring managers in the communications industry want to see what the journalist can do. Quality work will set the military journalist apart from his or her peers. Military journalists have an unprecedented opportunity for experience and to build. The foundation learned at DINFOS is second to none and opportunities for story telling are constant in the armed services. Military journalists are well respected in the communication disciplines, but they are not well known. That is the fault of the journalists themselves. If a military journalist wants to be seen and have his or her work recognized, the opportunity is there.

The DINFOS Trained Killer must advance through the objective.

Attack!

**Commented [KAS55]:** In your conclusion, you do a nice job of discussing overall what we learned from these interviews. What is the overall impact of this? Matt Barton always uses the expression "what's the news?" What do you want to climb to the top of a mountaintop and shout that you learned from this study. I think you've got some good things here, but it's your opportunity to convince your reader that what you've found is super valuable. Also, you've kind of made the classic mistake of introducing a really useful theory and then making no mention of it after the lit review. How does framing play into this? Was it a useful theory? Does your data tie into it at all? Is there anything your participants said that connect to the theory? Just some things to think about.

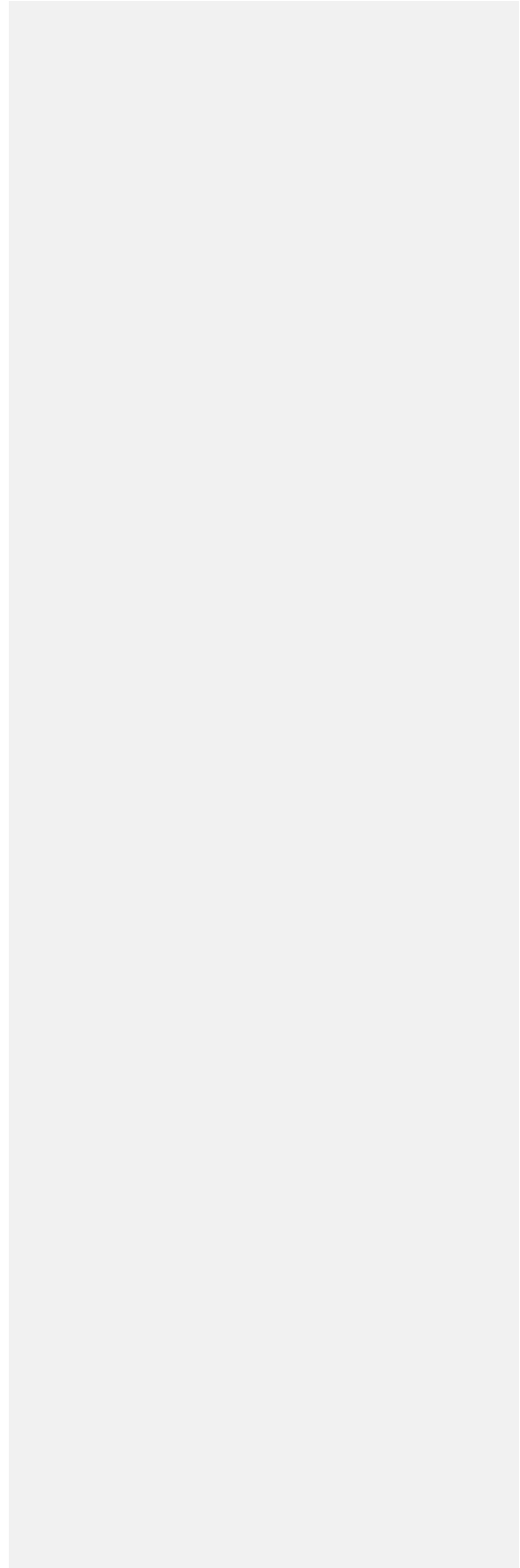
Overall, I think you're pretty much done with the intro, lit review and methods (with those minor edits I marked). We just need to beef up the analysis and conclusion a bit. Let me know if you have questions or how I can help ☺

**Commented [TB56R55]:** I expanded upon the conclusion to add how I framed my content in Afghanistan and about how framing didn't help me.

I also added that framing can help a journalist as well. It all depends on risk and accuracy.

DINFOS TRAINED KILLERS

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**Appendix**  
**Interview Research Questions**

1. What is your background in the communications industry, and what is your current position and duties?
2. What do you know about military journalists/Public Affairs Specialists? Have you ever interacted with them professionally or personally?
3. Do you know about the Defense Information School, how familiar are you with the level of training bestowed upon military journalists?
4. In your professional duties have you ever relied on a military journalist for imagery or content? If so were they top of mind as a source? If not, did you ever consider them as a source? Why or why not?
5. What is your opinion on the skills of military journalists? Do they possess the necessary skills to make it in your profession? Why or why not?
6. Hypothetically if you are looking to hire a new member of staff - whether you work in journalism or public relations- would you consider a military journalist as a viable candidate? Why or why not?
7. Many young military journalists are thrust into real-world situations and boast a large portfolio of work before graduation from college, yet experience difficulty obtaining employment based off their military service alone. Which do you value more, experience or education? Explain your reasoning.
8. Hypothetically if you interview two equal candidates applying for a position within your company, and one boasts military experience in your field, would you rate that person higher than his or her peer without military experience? Why or why not?
9. What role does a military journalist play in the communications industry?
10. Final thoughts?

**Appendix 2**  
**Interview Request Letter**

Greetings,

My name is Timothy L. Beery and I am a graduate student at Southern Utah University. I am working on a research project under the direction of Dr. Kevin Stein, in the Communications Department. I am researching the perspectives of Communications Professionals regarding military journalism. I desire 30 minutes of your time to hear your views of military journalists and public affairs specialists. I aim to find out how they are viewed among their peers in professional communication. Participation is voluntary and your comments will be identified as yours. If you wish to remain anonymous, then your wishes will be respected and your comments will be used as aggregate data with no attempt to identify you directly. Your participation in this study constitutes informed consent.

I would like to interview you and record your answers for graduate research purposes. All interviews will be recorded and identified as such. I look forward to hearing from you.

Thank you,

Timothy L. Beery  
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**Appendix 3**

**Interviews**

Bree Burkitt,

July 20, 2017

News Reporter, Bureau Chief

Cedar City Daily News

Cedar City, UT

11. What is your background in the communications industry, and what is your current position and duties?

- a. *I've been in journalism for about a decade now. I started writing in Arizona and eventually made it here (Cedar City). I wrote for The Spectrum –where I am now, the Arizona Daily Sun, I was the editor for my college paper and now I run the Cedar City office for The Spectrum and Daily News and I cover everything but sports.*

12. What do you know about military journalists/Public Affairs Specialists? Have you ever interacted with them professionally or personally?

- a. *When I was interning in D.C, I interned at the New Republic and another guy I was interning with had been a military journalist. He was out of the military at the time. That is honestly my only interaction with it (military journalism).*

13. Do you know about the Defense Information School, how familiar are you with the level of training bestowed upon military journalists?

- a. *No. I have never heard of it.*

14. In your professional duties have you ever relied on a military journalist for imagery or content? If so were they top of mind as a source? If not, did you ever consider them as a source? Why or why not?

- a. *I honestly don't think I've ever had to rely on one. I don't think there's ever been a story that they (military journalists) would be a source or even a relevant source. Neither here (Cedar City), nor when I worked in Flagstaff we didn't have any military stories. Our military coverage was limited to Veterans Day. That's just how it was, we didn't have any active duty military near us. I never served in those areas.*

15. What is your opinion on the skills of military journalists? Do they possess the necessary skills to make it in your profession? Why or why not?

- a. *I can tell you that the one individual that I worked with – in terms of civilian journalism, he had obviously worked with the military. He was really knowledgeable and he seemed to be very, very experienced.*

16. Hypothetically if you are looking to hire a new member of staff - whether you work in journalism or public relations- would you consider a military journalist as a viable candidate? Why or why not?

- a. *I would think so, because that is experience just like anything else.*

17. Many young military journalists are thrust into real-world situations and boast a large portfolio of work before graduation from college, yet experience difficulty obtaining

employment based off their military service alone. Which do you value more, experience or education? Explain your reasoning.

- a. *Real world – one hundred percent. You don't learn anything in journalism school! Definitely real world. Like everyone else, I went to journalism school – when I look at my own experience, I learned much more on the job than I did in journalism school. I make a joke that I went to journalism school just to get internships because you don't actually learn anything in school. On-the-job real world experience is always going to be better than what you learn in the classroom. It's no fault of the universities, it's just there is so much that you can't deal with in a classroom. So much of journalism is dealing with situations that present themselves to you, knowing how to be prepared to cover things and knowing how to handle situations. You can't learn that hypothetically.*

18. Hypothetically if you interview two equal candidates applying for a position within your company, and one boasts military experience in your field, would you rate that person higher than his or her peer without military experience? Why or why not?

- a. *That's a hard one. But for me, I would go and read clips and decide that way. I would base it off their previous reporting. What's on a page of a resumé is only worth so much. I would base my decision on their body of work.*

19. What role does a military journalist play in the communications industry?

- a. *I have no idea.*

## 20. Final thoughts?

- a. *From our conversation, it sounds like military journalism school is pretty intense. It seems like it is a crash course, which is good. As I mentioned earlier, on-the-job experience is always more valuable than anything theoretical. Actually doing something says much more...I think it would be valuable (for military journalists) to make those connections so that we know when things are happening and when they are relevant. In this field sometimes things come up and you have to call people you never expected.*

Shawn Denevan

July 20, 2017

KXDS FM General Manager at Dixie State University

St. George, UT

1. What is your background in the communications industry, and what is your current position and duties?
  - a. *Twenty-five years in radio broadcasting, multiple degrees in communications and broadcasting. The most recent is a master's degree in communications. I started in 1991 at the high school radio station. I've worked in radio in multiple capacities across the country; different states, different stations and different positions. I've been music director, program director, (I've done) mornings, nights, Rock n' Roll, oldies, and my current position is the Director of Radio at Dixie State University where I oversee two separate radio stations and teach radio broadcasting and audio production and fundamentals.*
  
2. What do you know about military journalists/Public Affairs Specialists? Have you ever interacted with them professionally or personally?
  - a. *I've not had any known interactions with military journalists. If I was talking to someone who is a journalist, they did not make it known that they were or are a military journalist or had any association with the military.*
  
3. Do you know about the Defense Information School, how familiar are you with the level of training bestowed upon military journalists?



- a. *I've not heard of the school nor am I aware of any specific training military journalists do.*
  
4. In your professional duties have you ever relied on a military journalist for imagery or content? If so were they top of mind as a source? If not, did you ever consider them as a source? Why or why not?
  - a. *I've not had any interactions so I am unable to answer this question.*
  
5. What is your opinion on the skills of military journalists? Do they possess the necessary skills to make it in your profession? Why or why not?
  - a. *I don't believe that a military journalist has any advantage or disadvantage over any other journalist. If I were to hire one, it would be based on the work they have done – the quality of work, not necessarily where they learned it from or who their last employer was. I would not put a military journalist before or behind anybody else. I think they would be on par. It's based on the work that they (journalists) can do, not where they learned that skill from or who they worked for.*
  
6. Hypothetically if you are looking to hire a new member of staff - whether you work in journalism or public relations- would you consider a military journalist as a viable candidate? Why or why not?
  - a. *As stated in my previous answer, I would review each candidate individually and base my hiring merit on their skills. Not where they learned it from or who they*

*learned it from. I don't believe any organization makes one candidate stand out from another. I believe the body of work from the applicant makes him or her stand out.*

7. Many young military journalists are thrust into real-world situations and boast a large portfolio of work before graduation from college, yet experience difficulty obtaining employment based off their military service alone. Which do you value more, experience or education? Explain your reasoning.

a. *In my current position; since I am working for a higher education institution, and I also have a body of work from the professional world, I do value both. Real world experience is just that, you are actually able to learn things. However, education and higher education does prove that an individual can do a task and complete it over a lengthy period of time such as a two, four, or six year degree. Knowing the dedication education requires and understanding the value of education is also important. With that said, I wouldn't necessarily choose education or one experience over another. I speak to my own personal bias, but that does happen in the hiring process.*

8. Hypothetically if you interview two equal candidates applying for a position within your company, and one boasts military experience in your field, would you rate that person higher than his or her peer without military experience? Why or why not?

a. *Now you are entering the realm of personal bias. I don't speak it much, because it often is not received well. I do have a personal bias against members of the*

*military based on multiple interactions. It's rare to find a humble member of the military service. I find that especially since 9/11 everyone has jumped on the patriotism bandwagon and I've had a number of personal experiences with students that are in military uniforms that use their service to get as much as they can for free. Whether that is girls, or food, they are basically milking the system for what it's worth under the guise of 'I'm a military guy, look at me, you want me!' That doesn't sit well with me. I've seen a guy in his complete dress blues cheat on a test multiple times in my classroom. It's a situation where there is always a few bad apples in every bunch, but I've seen more and more members of the military not act as they should. It's kind of like our president. It's like, 'hey we have a president, but he doesn't act presidential'. We have members of the military, but they don't act like patriotic Americans, they act like a bunch of kids with guns who are saying 'give me everything I can get'...I almost find that the exceptional member of the military is the exception. You combine that with the fact that many are returning from Iraq and Afghanistan; I know from personal experience, I know the military in general is not taking the time to change the cultural mindset of PTSD and traumatic brain injury. There is still the macho stigma of 'I'm a military guy, I'm strong I don't need to talk to no head shrink I'm fine.'. That macho culture also goes in line with the guys who are jobbing the system for free things, just because they served in the military. It irks me a lot. I had a kid in one of my classes who was in the National Guard who boasted about how he got six free meals on Veteran's Day. This kid was claiming to be a veteran when really all he had done was go to boot camp. So because of my personal bias*

*I would probably lean toward somebody not military, but that would not be an absolute discrimination.*

9. What role does a military journalist play in the communications industry?

- a. *I don't know; I think a military journalist plays the same role as any journalist and that is the reciting of information, whether true or false information, it is the reciting of it. Whether or not it is a report of a story or all out propaganda, it is still part of communication.*

10. Final thoughts?

- a. *I go back to my original statement where I have not had enough interaction with military journalists in the professional field for me to give a solid answer on some of the questions. I feel like most of the stuff I've shared is based on my personal bias...a good journalist or anyone looking for a journalism or news job needs to rely on the job that they can do and also have a portfolio of the work that they have done. Whereas I said I might be biased against somebody who was in the military, there are plenty of people with military service in their backgrounds who would be more biased to hire a military journalist. Maybe even if they are underqualified they may be more apt to hire just because of the family of military. Ultimately it comes down to the work. The work that they (military journalists) has to show and that's the bottom line. Whether journalists are military or not, I think they have to prove that they can do the job. I think when you put military service on a resumé it's similar to putting that you are a returned Mormon*

*missionary on a resumé. Some people would be like 'oh you're hired!' and others would be like 'I hate Mormons, you're not hired'. It all plays into discrimination and biases toward whomever and whatever. Again the bottom line is that the military journalist needs to do the same thing as any other journalist and be able to have a portfolio of work and a resumé of dedication and quality work. I don't believe a military journalist has to try any harder or less hard than anybody else. I believe that they are on the same footing as any other member of the journalism community trying to find a job. They have to know what they are doing, do their best at it, and put their best foot forward.*

Matthew Jacobson

July 20, 2017

Content Strategist

The Spectrum & Daily News

St. George, UT

1. What is your background in the communications industry, and what is your current position and duties?
  - a. *Seven years ago I decided to pursue journalism. I don't know why; but I went and got my bachelor's degree in communications so that I could become a journalist and about four years ago I got a job at The Spectrum, here in St. George. I started off as a copy editor and over the years, kinda worked my way up and now I am the content strategist for The Spectrum and Daily News. I write columns, assign stories, oversee the staff, oversee social media, program the website, design the paper, pretty much everything now. Pretty much everything just short of being the executive editor.*
  
2. What do you know about military journalists/Public Affairs Specialists? Have you ever interacted with them professionally or personally?
  - a. *I actually have not, professionally or personally. What I know about military journalism is what I have sort of learned, getting my bachelor's in communications which is not a lot in that specialty. Also from watching stations such as CNN and MSNBC when they talk about the journalism that comes out of the Middle East and seeing wire reports with stuff that comes from Army journalists.*

3. Do you know about the Defense Information School, how familiar are you with the level of training bestowed upon military journalists?

a. *I do not know about the school.*

4. In your professional duties have you ever relied on a military journalist for imagery or content? If so were they top of mind as a source? If not, did you ever consider them as a source? Why or why not?

a. *I think that the only time that we may have used specifically an Army journalist or military journalist is would be when they came through the AP wire or through the USA Today network. We don't have a lot of military stories that we are reporting on here, in St. George. It's a wider reach area, and we would have to have a story from a professional outside of our coverage area. If we do use them – and I can't say for sure – it would be through one of the wire services.*

5. What is your opinion on the skills of military journalists? Do they possess the necessary skills to make it in your profession? Why or why not?

a. *I would probably guess that they have more skills than necessary to make it in this profession. There is the regular kind of journalism we do where we are just reporting on people's stories around the state of Utah – whereas it sounds like the military has far more rigorous training than the average communications major would have. There is also the work in the actual field where military journalists*

*are put into situations that are potentially hazardous or dangerous. So I would say military journalists are qualified and then some.*

6. Hypothetically if you are looking to hire a new member of staff - whether you work in journalism or public relations- would you consider a military journalist as a viable candidate? Why or why not?
  - a. *I would definitely consider a military journalist a viable candidate. I would take into consideration the fact that not only are they doing regular journalism like I said before, but they are doing kind of a heightened, advanced type of journalism in that it is a more important and more strenuous type of work. So I would definitely take that into consideration.*
  
7. Many young military journalists are thrust into real-world situations and boast a large portfolio of work before graduation from college, yet experience difficulty obtaining employment based off their military service alone. Which do you value more, experience or education? Explain your reasoning.
  - a. *I personally value experience because there is a lot that it teaches you that a classroom can't. Unfortunately the reality is that a lot of places need a bachelor's degree and they don't care. That is really unfortunate because there is a lot that is learned outside the classroom that is really valuable. Military journalists definitely have a lot of these skills. For me personally I would definitely take experience over education. It's just sad that places want that piece of paper before they even start to consider you.*



8. Hypothetically if you interview two equal candidates applying for a position within your company, and one boasts military experience in your field, would you rate that person higher than his or her peer without military experience? Why or why not?
  - a. *As I said before, if they both have the same qualifications and this military journalist had this great portfolio of amazing things that he or she has done out in the field, versus someone who maybe has just kind of been around town and has been reporting on city council meetings, I would definitely take the military journalist just because the expertise that he or she would bring to the table would be tremendous. I believe that would also give us (The Spectrum) a leg up to have somebody like that on our staff who we know we can count on to do well in any situation, whether it is an intense situation or just another city council meeting. It would be great to know we have someone who can tackle both those things. I would probably choose the military journalist with the great portfolio.*
  
9. What role does a military journalist play in the communications industry?
  - a. *That's a really great question. Right now it is a really important role because not everyone is willing to put themselves into dangerous situations – whether or not they actually end up in those dangerous situations. Speaking personally, I don't know that I could say that I am going to go out and report on military stuff. I don't know if I would go into war zones. Military journalists, just like any member of the media have one of the most important jobs in America, which is maintaining a free and open press that keeps our leaders and the world leaders in*

*check from another standpoint that is free from government. I'm super biased on that, but I really consider it one of the most important jobs in America and one of the most important jobs in the world. You look at other countries like Russia and Poland where there is no free press, where journalism is more of a puppet show, really, it's just there as a pageantry sort of thing that really serves no purpose other than the government's PR. So American journalism, military journalism is super important because it is what keeps our government honest.*

10. Final thoughts?

- a. *I don't think so, I think we've covered it all. At least as far as my knowledge on the subject goes.*

Haven Scott

July 21, 2017

Freelance Journalist, formerly of The Spectrum and Daily News

Cedar City, UT

1. What is your background in the communications industry, and what is your current position and duties?
  - a. *I have two years' experience reporting a wide variety of subjects for the Spectrum and Daily News. I am currently looking for work in the communications industry due to a corporate-wide layoff at Gannett that affected nearly 1000 nationwide.*
  
2. What do you know about military journalists/Public Affairs Specialists? Have you ever interacted with them professionally or personally?
  - a. *I did not know the military had journalists until I met Tim Beery and later Josh Smith who has had a successful career in Afghanistan working with Stars and Stripes. Since that time I have dealt with a handful of them professionally.*
  
3. Do you know about the Defense Information School, how familiar are you with the level of training bestowed upon military journalists?
  - a. *I have never heard of the school and I have no familiarity at all*

4. In your professional duties have you ever relied on a military journalist for imagery or content? If so were they top of mind as a source? If not, did you ever consider them as a source? Why or why not?
  - a. *I have never had to rely on a military journalist for content, but I've found that when you need to speak to somebody, a base historian for example, and they will not answer your phone calls, the military journalists on base will often know a better way to reach the person. In addition there are bases such as Nellis Air Force Base in Las Vegas that have public affairs specialists who take weeks to get back to you, and there are places like Kirtland in New Mexico who get back to you the same day. If you are having trouble reaching someone, I would advise finding the military journalist on base. They have already had that difficulty and know the situation, or they can help with an angle one might have missed, as happened with me once.*
  
5. What is your opinion on the skills of military journalists? Do they possess the necessary skills to make it in your profession? Why or why not?
  - a. *I would say they possess more skills than myself. There are only two hard aspects of journalism in my opinion; dealing with rejection and writing about unpleasant things. I have never been in the military, but I can imagine being yelled at by a county commissioner who dislikes something you wrote pales in comparison to the barrage of insults during introductory boot camp. I really disliked writing about child molesters and crime in general, it was hard not to take that stuff*

*home. Again, while unpleasant, I have heard horror stories from friends who served in Iraq and Afghanistan. Two people that I consider dear friends did not make it back at all I would like to think everybody would agree that a military journalist possessed all the necessary skills and more.*

6. Hypothetically if you are looking to hire a new member of staff - whether you work in journalism or public relations- would you consider a military journalist as a viable candidate? Why or why not?
  - a. *I might be kind of biased in this aspect because I have a lot of friends who have served in the military, or National Guard, and I have nothing but the highest respect for them. So if it was me hiring, I would probably hire a military journalist first. Not only out of respect for their service, but because one could be assured that they could handle what we “unmilitary” people would consider stressful.*
  
7. Many young military journalists are thrust into real-world situations and boast a large portfolio of work before graduation from college, yet experience difficulty obtaining employment based off their military service alone. Which do you value more, experience or education? Explain your reasoning.
  - a. *If this was asked to me before I started college, I would have said education. Nobody would hire me before college due to my only reporting taking place at my old high school newspaper. Since I have graduated college and worked professionally as a reporter, I would say experience. My education at Southern*

*Utah University was good, but it only lays a small foundation to begin a career. I would say 90 percent of what I know about being a good journalist I learned from my co-workers, editors, being out in the field, making information requests, screwing up, pissing people off, making people so happy they cry, being plagiarized by competing news outlets, having my articles framed and hung in churches and taking to other reporters who are crammed into the back rows of every different event you can think of.*

8. Hypothetically if you interview two equal candidates applying for a position within your company, and one boasts military experience in your field, would you rate that person higher than his or her peer without military experience? Why or why not?
  - a. *I would rate the person with military experience higher. Because their sacrifice means a lot to me. It doesn't matter what branch or position of military it is, some people never even leave the United States, some never see battle, regardless, all military serve for one purpose – to defend my right of freedom of the press, and all the other cool rights I enjoy.*
  
9. What role does a military journalist play in the communications industry?
  - a. *I did a little research for this question and realized a college education is not required to be a military journalist. I will say that I applied to both the Iron County Today and The Spectrum a half a dozen times each and was never hired until I was close to completing my bachelor's degree. I would like to think a*

*military journalist's experience would count for as much if not more than a college education.*

10. Final thoughts?

- a. *'Many young military journalists are thrust into real-world situations and boast a large portfolio of work before graduation from college, yet experience difficulty obtaining employment based off their military service alone.'* – *I did not realize this was a problem and it is shocking. I hope the research on this project can shed some light on the problem and help out others.*

David DeMille

July 21, 2017

News Reporter

The Spectrum

St. George, UT

1. What is your background in the communications industry, and what is your current position and duties?
  - a. *I am a news reporter at the Spectrum and Daily News in St. George, Utah. (The Spectrum) is owned and operated by Gannett Publishing and I've been here for about eight years. Previous to that I also worked in news and sports writing for a variety of publications here in Utah, also in southern California. Currently I mostly cover local government and politics.*
2. What do you know about military journalists/Public Affairs Specialists? Have you ever interacted with them professionally or personally?
  - a. *I have, and I should preface this by saying that I've met a few people who have come out of military school. At least in my personal interactions here in Southern Utah and the Southern Nevada region it seems like you tend to see them in Public Affairs roles especially working for government. Maybe military experience helps with that. I think they are probably good at sticking to regimented hierarchy, they can explain acronyms and are maybe better equipped to work in a bureaucracy and stick to a thick set of rules and regs. Maybe they like that. That does seem to be typically where I have interacted with folks who started in the military.*
3. Do you know about the Defense Information School, how familiar are you with the level of training bestowed upon military journalists?



- a. *I'm familiar with it, I can't say I know much about the level of education or how well regarded an education there would be on the market. I would assume, given the resources with which the military works and the importance of public affairs to the military that the school is a priority and the students who attend are given a firm base – at least from a technical aspect – of journalism, PR or whatever it is that they choose to study.*
4. In your professional duties have you ever relied on a military journalist for imagery or content? If so were they top of mind as a source? If not, did you ever consider them as a source? Why or why not?
  - a. *I have, though I think it has been exclusively in their roles as public affairs officers for government agencies. When I need information, or a written release or filler or just a photo from an organization such as the Bureau of Land Management or the Transportation Department it is nice to reach out to someone with the breadth of skills that military trained journalists seem to have. It's nice to know that I can reach out to one of them and know that they can produce a photo or write well enough that we can publish them without much editing. Some of that contact has been limited, but I would say that I have used them (military journalists) as sources and trusted them.*
5. What is your opinion on the skills of military journalists? Do they possess the necessary skills to make it in your profession? Why or why not?
  - a. *Again I think you will find a very strong technical proficiency. Still photography, technical writing, videography. More recently you have to have an expertise in social media, digital media, and in this business being able to communicate*

*across the full spectrum like that has become an increasingly important skill. I think you can also assign military stereotypes to some people, punctuality, ability to organize, understanding of leadership skills etc. But some of that is just reflection of the individual and not necessarily a certainty. Just because someone was Navy doesn't automatically mean they're gonna be Mr. or Mrs. Dependable, but it does seem to count for something.*

6. Hypothetically if you are looking to hire a new member of staff - whether you work in journalism or public relations- would you consider a military journalist as a viable candidate? Why or why not?
  - a. *The technical skills would likely be a real plus. Military experience often comes with some other expertise which might be useful. That could be some specific mechanical skill or knowledge of a specific part of the world or specific culture. However I would say that hiring on a generality would be difficult. It's probably best to say that military service shouldn't discourage a company from making a hire. At the end of the day I think you have to look at an applicant on his or her merits*
  
7. Many young military journalists are thrust into real-world situations and boast a large portfolio of work before graduation from college, yet experience difficulty obtaining employment based off their military service alone. Which do you value more, experience or education? Explain your reasoning.

- a. *I wish I understood a little bit more about why that happens. I really don't know much about it. I would say journalism is heavily dependent on technical skills; do you know how to research, can you write quickly and accurately, can you use a camera, can you apply yourself across social media, can you comb through metrics to better understand your audience? I would assume military school provides that type of skill training as well as any other journalism school. There probably is some correlation with proximity. A local newspaper which focuses on a local community may want an applicant with knowledge of that community. Maybe spending time in the services prevents that. You also have the common private industry obstacles, knowing people, having connections, such as professors who know hiring managers and feed them candidates. As far as the impediments, I find it interesting and worth looking into, especially with everything that I've read with the larger issue of people coming out of the services and having trouble adjusting to society, having trouble finding work, and running into some prejudices along the way. It's worthwhile looking into this from the journalism end. It's a topic I'm not real familiar with, as far as military journalists having trouble finding work, but I can see that if it is happening in other industries it is probably happening here too.*
8. Hypothetically if you interview two equal candidates applying for a position within your company, and one boasts military experience in your field, would you rate that person higher than his or her peer without military experience? Why or why not?
- a. *I would say it would depend on the position. If you are hiring for a position that depends on those technical skills such as a photographer, videographer, or data*

*journalist then that military experience could have an advantage. Or if you are hiring a reporter for a military beat, military experience could help that person connect with the particular audience. However typically, the attributes of the individual applicant would drive the decision.*

9. What role does a military journalist play in the communications industry?

- a. *Perspective is important. As much as ethnic diversity and gender diversity has helped the media, I think perspective is important in the newsroom. I also think perspective plays a social function to recognize those who have made sacrifices. It's recognizing the value in not only the abilities someone brings to a job, but the decisions they have made, the life decisions and the impact they have had overall. Their perspective plays a role.*

10. Final thoughts?

- a. *I will say that I think that there is probably a lot of what plays into the overall story of people coming out of the services and struggling to adjust or vice versa, I would imagine a lot of that plays into this. I think we can build on our ability to understand perspective. I think there is always a hiring bias and I'm sure a lot of those things play into it. I think maybe researching the way people who come out of the services interface with the hiring market can help to answer some of those questions.*

A conversation with the Central Communications Staff at the Utah Department of Transportation

Joseph Walker, Director of Communications – UDOT

John Gleason, Public Information Officer – UDOT

Zach Whitney, Digital Communications Specialist – UDOT

July 21, 2017

Salt Lake City, UT

1. What is your background in the communications industry, and what is your current position and duties?

- a. *(JW)I am the Director of Communications for the Utah Department of Transportation. I got into this position, through the course of my career. I'm old; so I started out in journalism and I've moved back and forth between journalism and communications. I've worked for the LDS Church, Geneva Steel, various consulting agencies, before having this position here, at UDOT.*
  
- b. *(JG) I'm the Public Information Officer for UDOT. I graduated college in '96 and I've spent the bulk of my career at ABC4, the local ABC affiliate here in Salt Lake. I spent almost 15 years there and I started out as a weekend assignment editor/field producer. I worked my way up, I kinda had a knack for the assignment desk – assigning and finding stories – and became the assignment manager probably 7 or 8 years into it and for the last 4-5 years I was the managing editor. I basically ran the news day and the editorial meetings and was charged with finding stories for the reporters. (You would hope that they came with their own ideas, but for the most part they didn't and the buck stopped here – as I was told many many times) Before that, and after spending a number of years at channel 4 I was ready for a change. I majored in print journalism at Utah State University*

*and I wrote for the local paper there, the Cache Citizen. I actually thought I would go into the newspapers. I had an internship with the Salt Lake Tribune, and they would have me cover stories up there (Logan) during my senior year. At that time I also I moved to Chicago and started producing a talk show (The Jerry Springer Show). My internships my senior year got me interested in the television side of things and I was able to parlay that experience into channel 4. As I said, after a number of years there I was ready for a change and that's when this current opportunity with UDOT opened up for me.*

- c. *(ZW) I am the digital communications specialist for UDOT and I am in charge of telling stories and managing social media. I graduated in 2009 from the University of Utah with a degree in mass communication. Initially when I graduated I had trouble finding work – it was 2009 and we were in the midst of a recession. It took me about a year to get a reporter gig up in Idaho. I worked there for almost two years and then I got a job at Fox 13 in Utah. I was a reporter in Salt Lake for about a year and a half and then they sent me to St. George to open a bureau there and I was the bureau chief there for about 5 years. I worked for Fox until UDOT hired me.*
2. What do you know about military journalists/Public Affairs Specialists? Have you ever interacted with them professionally or personally?
  - a. *(JW) I have a unique perspective. My son-in-law, Brock Jones is the Army National Guard. He has done 4 tours of duty, in Iraq and Afghanistan and the last two were both as a public affairs officer. In fact his employment now is working in*

*public affairs for the Army. He's been very involved in that for the last several years. I am very aware of the work he does, we talk about it quite a bit, and I have great respect for the hard work that (military journalists) do. (Comments from ZW about Hill AFB and Camp Williams reminded JW of past experience)... When I worked at the Deseret News I worked with Public Affairs Officers on the dedication of a new building out at Camp Williams. They were very, very good to work with out there.*

- b. *(JG) You know, I don't have any knowledge, so that is a hard question for me to answer. You know, actually I would like to change my answer (Comments from ZW and JW seemingly jogged JG's memory and he realized he did have experience dealing with military PAOs) I did deal with Public Affairs officers in helping me to set up stories – but as far as reporters, military reporters, I don't have much experience with them.*
- c. *(ZW) Just as a reporter. I worked with Public Affairs officers covering stories. I covered stories at Hill Air Force Base and at Camp Williams.*

3. Do you know about the Defense Information School (DINFOS), how familiar are you with the level of training bestowed upon military journalists?

- a. *(JW) I know Brock (Jones) attended that school. I know it was a very intensive course, I know he was worn out when he came back from the school. It covered a lot of stuff, and Brock already had a lot of that background information, but he*

*credited it with really providing the foundation he would use for all of his future work doing public affairs for the Army.*

b. *(JG) I didn't know that (DINFOS) existed.*

c. *(ZW) Likewise, I didn't know it existed*

4. In your professional duties have you ever relied on a military journalist for imagery or content? If so were they top of mind as a source? If not, did you ever consider them as a source? Why or why not?

a. *(JW) It depends on the story; for certain stories – absolutely! Certainly for information they (military journalists) were top of mind. Also for providing photos. As stated, though it depends on the story; they would be top of mind when we are talking about the dedication for a new building at Camp Williams, then of course they are top of mind for that. They probably wouldn't be top of mind for other stories. Now taking it out of the realm of strictly journalism; there have been two or three occasions in my time here at UDOT where we have been doing work near a military facility – near Hill Field or near Camp Williams – where we have gone to Public Affairs folks. They were top of mind in that situation, they were the folks I trusted to get the information I needed. In one case we wanted to fly drones to get aerial photos and get footage of the roads bordering Camp Williams. We needed to make sure we were OK to do that, so Brock was who I*



*went to for that. Also up near Hill Field, we wanted to have some interaction with the people there about some new interchange work we were doing there. In both of those cases, when we needed specific military involvement that is who I went to. Rather than calling the commanders office at either of those facilities I went to the public affairs office, because I knew they could help me.*

- b. *(JG) I would echo what Joe said; covering military type stories, you would seek photos and imagery from public affairs. One thing I remember from working with Hill Air Force Base and Camp Williams is that they have a lot of restrictions on what they can say. For example if there was a plane crash – a military plane crash – it was a little bit more difficult getting the information. Understandably so, when it's a situation like that you have sensitive information. They put restrictions on you (the civilian journalist), where you can put your photographers and such. With those kind of things, you would rely on them (PAO) to provide images and information. There is only so much they can do though.*
- c. *(ZW) Depending on the story and the topic, I feel like we would rely on public affairs officers quite a bit. Maybe some more than others, depending on the relationship. I don't recall his name, but I remember the Army National Guard Public Affairs Officer being exceptionally helpful. (Joking banter between the three men with JW offering that Brock Jones was the helpful person and JG identifying Lt. Col (Ret) Hank McEntire as a former ARNG PAO along with Lt. Col Stephen Fairbourn being identified too) Anytime there was a deployment or*

*anything going on, we could always call and he (ARNG PAO) would do anything he could to get us what we needed.*

5. What is your opinion on the skills of military journalists? Do they possess the necessary skills to make it in your profession? Why or why not?

- a. *(JW) For me, because of my close association with military personnel I would say absolutely. It's because of the real-world experience that they have. It's not all that different than working with a public information or public relations person from any organization. There are limitations, they are going to want to do what is in the best interest of their organization. My experience in working with them and seeing the work is that they absolutely have good skills, good experience and that experience means a lot to me. Many have a good background and good ability. The ones that I've worked with have been good writers and good with visuals and prose. I've had really good experience with them. It's something where if someone comes to me saying they've had experience in the military, that's a positive thing for me. I interview people for jobs and they're coming out of college with a communications degree and they can't compose a complete sentence. I've not run into that with military people.*

- b. *(JG) I agree with Joe, it's a huge positive and prestige that comes with reporting for the military. Again I haven't had a lot of contact, but I recognize that it is a unique set of skills that military journalists have and I believe they would*

*translate well. It's like working for any organization, there's just such a respect that I have for our military. (JW made a comment in jest stating that it is a unique situation to talk to a person who has the ability to 'gut you', JG and ZW laughed and JW told a funny story about Brock Jones joking about it.)*

- c. *(ZW) Actually I may argue with Joe a little bit, I feel like in my interactions, the skills are a little bit higher. I assume this has to do with the training that they go through. I feel like they have a better understanding for what a reporter is looking for and knowing the elements reporters need to have to complete a story. At least that has been my perspective. I feel like those skills are maybe a little higher than your typical PR person who is just trying to sell a story. I feel like military PAOs have a little more knowledge and a better feel for what the media is looking for.*
6. Hypothetically if you are looking to hire a new member of staff - whether you work in journalism or public relations- would you consider a military journalist as a viable candidate? Why or why not?
- a. *(JW) Absolutely, I would like it if they had other experience in addition to the military but I would absolutely consider them a viable candidate for the very reasons we have discussed. They are very good at what they do.*
- b. *(JG) Yes, without hesitation. Again I think you have to treat every case as unique. It wouldn't be a blanket statement, but that experience is definitely an asset and if*

*they had the set of skills you are looking for and they would be a good fit I think they would absolutely be a great asset.*

- c. *(ZW) Absolutely. Given my experience, I would find those skills military journalists know as definitely helpful. I would hope there would be other experience beyond that though.*

7. Many young military journalists are thrust into real-world situations and boast a large portfolio of work before graduation from college, yet experience difficulty obtaining employment based off their military service alone. Which do you value more, experience or education? Explain your reasoning.

- a. *(JW) I'm going to put a lot more stock in experience, but you have to understand that I come from the perspective of a person who doesn't have a degree. I don't have a degree. I got this job because of my tremendous experience. They (UDOT) didn't care that I didn't have a degree because I have a lot of experience. If they have the right kind of experience and can demonstrate the ability, I absolutely give candidates the opportunity to apply. There are some organizations, however where a degree is mandatory. I have seen some candidates that are fresh out of college who don't know anything. The degree is great, and it is a noteworthy accomplishment, but I am much more interested in the experiences you've had and the skills that you have. I have had the opposite experience of having employees who have had master's degrees and just didn't possess the skill and*

*couldn't be trusted to do things without tremendous supervision. But with all that said, I would like to see college experience as well. If the only experience the applicant has is military, it narrows them as an applicant because the experience is limited. Similar to a fresh college graduate – if you've only done one thing then you just don't have a lot of experience. If an applicant had only military experience it wouldn't put them out of the running, as far as I'm concerned, but I would really want to see a demonstration of those skills. Sometimes that is what a degree represents it is a punch card saying they know this stuff but for an applicant without a degree they would really need a strong portfolio to show they are capable of doing the job.*

- b. *(JG) It wouldn't be an automatic disqualifier if an applicant didn't have a degree. It's a case by case thing. You are feeling out each interview and each candidate. Figuring out that experience, whether it is military experience or job experience. You have to think about all things being equal. If you have two candidates one has a degree and one doesn't I would lean naturally towards the candidate who has the degree. (JW replied... 'You would? I totally wouldn't' to which JG laughed) With all things being equal and that was the only thing – I would lean that way. (ZW interjected stating that JW came from a different perspective to which JG jokingly razzed JW for looking at applicants with a college degree.) To me hiring people is a fit. You'll find people with the skillset who can do the job but you have to find the fit. (JW enthusiastically agreed with JG. He even went on to say that fit meant more to him than education.)*

*To me fit can overcome not having a degree.*

- c. *(ZW) I come from a different perspective. I don't feel like I learned a lot in college. I don't feel like my degree was that useful. I learned a lot on the job. So to me that portfolio is the most important thing to me. On the same token, I can look at a resumé that says 'I have 5 years of Army public affairs', well that's great, but without a reel it really doesn't carry much weight. I need you to show me what you have done. If you don't have examples from that period, then that experience is meaningless. Just as meaningless as a piece of paper that says you graduated with a degree. So I feel like demonstration really needs to be there. I feel really strongly about that.*

8. Hypothetically if you interview two equal candidates applying for a position within your company, and one boasts military experience in your field, would you rate that person higher than his or her peer without military experience? Why or why not?

- a. *(JW) The military experience is really good and it is a value to me. But if they have other experience I am ok with that. I would weigh the merits of each candidate. If I am hiring a candidate here, at UDOT, then military experience is a great asset. We have many of the same limitations here as military journalists and that government experience goes a long way here. We have lots of the same kind*

*of bosses and we are trying to do the same kinds of things. So if we are hiring someone here I think that is a real added benefit.*

b. *(JG) I would consider the military journalist. I think that experience is valuable and I would look at it closely.*

c. *(ZW) If I am looking at having military experience and not having military experience, there isn't much of a difference to me, personally.*

9. What role does a military journalist play in the communications industry?

a. *(JW) It's a vital role for keeping the public informed for what our military is doing. It's particularly vital in the case of deployment. Letting the public know what our boys and girls are doing, how they're doing and the type of work they are doing is vitally important. So I think military journalism serves a vital function communicating with the general public and a very specific public connected with the men and women who are deployed...Also at home, like take for instance Hill Field. It is such a huge, huge thing in Davis County. I mean it is huge. In terms of actual physical space and in terms of its presence. It is so important, so many jobs are tied there. Not just military jobs, so it is really critical to be able to communicate to the public about what that huge facility is doing in Davis County and the impacts it is having. It's a really vital role to have people know what is going on when they hear those jets thundering overhead.*

*Because of outreach from the PAO office I know what those jets are doing when they fly over my house. It is a vital role.*

- b. *(JG) I couldn't have said it better. Communicating what our men and women are doing to family members and the internal audience is important.*
  
- c. *(ZW) I think there is a major benefit to the PAO function. Our military can operate with a veil of secrecy – and rightfully so – but having the PAO there to act as the spokesperson and explain things when appropriate is a major benefit. Taxpayers have a stake of ownership in governmental agencies and they have a right to know what is going on. So to have a person who is able to strike a balance and explain what is happening with agencies is a key position. Especially in terms of government. I feel similar with our position here at UDOT. We have the information the public wants to know and we are able to tell them what we can.*

10. Final thoughts?

- a. *(JG) I think there is a tremendous respect with military service in general that extends to military journalists. It is a deserved respect. They perform a function that is absolutely necessary. As far as military journalists and public affairs they are keeping people informed and letting the public know what is happening.*



- b. *(ZW) I call myself a storyteller in the position of military journalists I have a level of jealousy because there are so many good stories in the military. It is admirable to have an organization that is able to tell the military story. There is a level of respect and pride with the military and having military journalists who tell that story is admirable and I respect it.*
- c. *(JW) I came from a time when the military wasn't looked fondly upon. Working for the military was looked down upon and it wasn't respected. I'm glad to hear the perspectives of John and Zach and so many other people younger than me who do respect the military. Because we should respect the military. The work they do merits respect and I'm glad to see that things have changed since I was young. For military communications professionals, the important work they do is hard. It's difficult to get the right information out to the public and have the information the public wants to know. I have profound respect for the work they do.*

Randy Brown a.k.a Charlie Sherpa,

July 29, 2017

Freelance writer/Editor, former magazine publisher

Central Iowa

What is your background in the communications industry, and what is your current position and duties?

- a. *I am a former weekly community and daily metro newspaper editor and reporter, as well as former editor of national trade and consumer magazines. I've managed editorial staffs of up to five paid members, and hired and managed freelance reporters and photographers. I hold a 1990 bachelor's degree in news-editorial journalism from Drake University, Des Moines, Iowa, and a 2006 masters in architectural studies from Iowa State University, Ames Iowa. I'm also a retired 20-year veteran of the Iowa Army National Guard. My specialty was 25-series communications—which included hardware such as radios, computers, and photocopiers. I used to joke that I was media in my civilian career, and messenger in my military role. During a short 7-month deployment with the Multinational Force and Observers (MFO) in 2003, however, I managed an Armed Forces Network TV/radio station and outdoor movie theater at an installation called Southcamp, Sinai Peninsula. I was also a "lessons-learned integrator" on multiple stateside active-duty tours—someone who documented military training successes in print and visual content, in order to share those lessons internally with similar Army organizations. After I retired from the military, I embedded with my former unit as civilian media for a few weeks in Afghanistan, May-June*

*2011. I am now a freelance editor, writer, and book publisher located in Central Iowa.*

2. What do you know about military journalists/Public Affairs Specialists? Have you ever interacted with them professionally or personally?

- a. *As the team-leader for Lessons-Learned Integration Iowa (L2I Iowa) in 2007-2009, I was paired with a 46R broadcast journalist. In 2009-2010, I was assigned as the sole Knowledge Management Officer (KMO) for a 3,000-member brigade of Iowa National Guard soldiers. The KMO worked directly for the brigade executive officer, a position partly intended to work people-and-process issues that occur between Operations (S3) and Information Management (S6). Informally, because of my civilian expertise and my KMO role, I worked alongside the brigade's Public Affairs Officer and NCO (PAO/PANCO) to advise the brigade commander regarding policies regarding both organizational and individual citizen-soldier use of blogs and social media. Blogs and social media were still relatively new to the Iowa National Guard during this time. I decided to learn-by-doing, and began writing under a pseudonym about my own family's pre-deployment experiences in 2009. In 2016, I worked with my former brigade Public Affairs colleagues to collate, index, and publish a year's worth of their print reporting from Afghanistan. This was possible, largely because governmentally produced information is free of copyright. The resulting 668-page trade paperback was titled "Reporting for Duty: U.S. Citizen-Soldier Journalism from the Afghan Surge, 2010-2011."*

3. Do you know about the Defense Information School, how familiar are you with the level of training bestowed upon military journalists?

*I have colleagues who are DINFOS graduates and acquaintances who are instructors there. Any familiarity I have with the curriculum, however, is informal. I believe the coursework for print journalists parallels much of what I received in college.*

4. In your professional duties have you ever relied on a military journalist for imagery or content? If so were they top of mind as a source? If not, did you ever consider them as a source? Why or why not?

*At L2I Iowa, we often used print, photo, and video content available via Defense Video & Imagery Distribution System (DVIDS) to augment our local coverage. We even solicited coverage from specific units and missions downrange (example: B-roll from Engineer route-clearance missions), to give our pre-deployment customers a better idea of what conditions they were soon to face downrange themselves.*

5. What is your opinion on the skills of military journalists? Do they possess the necessary skills to make it in your profession? Why or why not?

*Military-trained journalists are ideal candidates for journalism jobs—and particularly those focused on community story-telling. They're trained to get sources' names and departments and hometowns. At higher ranks and/or experience levels, they're trained in*

*more than one media—print guys can shoot photos; videographers can write newsletters. They also have skills in how to present information, which are potentially useful in public relations, media relations, and events management. Most importantly, they're trained and experienced to work independently, deliver quality work on deadline, and to work within all levels, cultures, and functions of an organization/community.*

6. Hypothetically if you are looking to hire a new member of staff - whether you work in journalism or public relations- would you consider a military journalist as a viable candidate? Why or why not?

*I would certainly consider a candidate with training and experience as a military journalist as a potential candidate for civilian journalism or public relations work.*

7. Many young military journalists are thrust into real-world situations and boast a large portfolio of work before graduation from college, yet experience difficulty obtaining employment based off their military service alone. Which do you value more, experience or education? Explain your reasoning.

*A "clip-book" or portfolio is the single most-important resource for any journalist. Show me what you've got, where you've been, what you've done with whatever education or opportunities you've had. Experience is education; education is not always experience.*

*That said, aspiring journalists with military clips should probably make sure to balance their portfolios with a variety of products, and covering a range civilian and military topics.*

8. Hypothetically if you interview two equal candidates applying for a position within your company, and one boasts military experience in your field, would you rate that person higher than his or her peer without military experience? Why or why not?

*Veteran status can be an officially recognized preferred hire in some organizations. Veteran status can also be a protected class. As a hiring editor in the past, I've tried to avoid asking interviewees questions about current and/or past military service, because of the protected-class issue. It'd be the same as asking someone's age, marital status, or religion.*

*If they bring it up, I'll explore it carefully, bearing in mind that others on the hiring committee might not share my enthusiasm for or familiarity with the military.*

9. What role does a military journalist play in the communications industry?

*Military journalists illuminate and share stories of military communities. Depending on their needs and methods, civilian journalists may use this content to augment their own reporting or products, or they may relay/use the content with (preferred) or without attribution. This isn't just because government-*

*generated content is free of copyright—the practice of "rewriting" competitors' copy has a long history in journalism!*

10. Final thoughts?

*None at this time.*