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Description

The media struggles against government restrictions in trying to accurately report action during the Gulf War, leading some reporters to head out on dangerous solo missions.

Keywords

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MLA

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APA

CHICAGO MANUAL OF STYLE

Transcript
Media Censorship During Gulf War
ARTHUR KENT, reporting (from Saudi Arabia):
The Pentagon has all but transformed the news media here into another branch of the military. The press office says it doesn't want too many reporters cluttering up the battlefield. The result, Americans are seeing the Pentagon's version of the war.
Unidentified Soldier #1: OK. Can you just follow me then?
Unidentified Reporter #1: Thanks.
KENT: They are the tightest restrictions US journalists have ever been subjected to in time of war.
Unidentified Soldier #2: Enter here.
KENT: Like the campaign itself. News coverage of the battlefield comes courtesy of US military planners.
Unknown Female Soldier: NBC. Arthur Kent.
KENT: Since the bombing started January 16th, reporters cannot request visits to the troops in the field. With a few exceptions, all coverage comes from a dozen small groups of journalists who pool their material with their colleagues massed in the rear. Everything, from the ship, airfield, or ground unit the pool will visit, to the length of the assignment, to the relay of pictures and stories to the outside world, is under military control. This has caused gaping holes in news coverage.
For example, reporters who covered the return of the Stealth planes that first bombed Baghdad were frustrated in their efforts to report the stories swiftly.
PENTAGON OFFICIAL: Some of you have been critical...
KENT: The Pentagon later apologized. US officers involved has misinterpreted their own rules, and two days ago NBC's Brad Willis, acting as pool reporter with the Marines, was taken to the town of Khafji. There he covered Marines sweeping the town's deserted streets, but he was not informed of the major oil spill on the beaches nearby. It was only today, six days after the Iraqis began dumping oil into the Gulf,
that a special pool, under military supervision, was allowed to photograph these scenes. Most reporters here are striving to get closer to the story. Many have headed off on their own. One four-man team did so last week and hasn't been seen since. The CBS crew, headed by correspondent Bob Simon is still missing tonight. Last Sunday he spoke for many of us about the US military's hammerlock on pre-reporting: ‘We'll do what we tried to do in Vietnam. We'll get in our cars and try to get there. If they'll try to stop us, it will be a battle of wits.’

We have no news tonight on Bob and his crew. We can only hope that they're safe. One thing we do know is that until the Pentagon opens up and allows more of us to cover this war properly, more journalists will try to find a back door to the front, and, in doing so, may wind up in trouble themselves.