

HEADQUARTERS
UNITED STATES MILITARY ASSISTANCE COMMAND, VIETNAM
APO San Francisco 96243
Office of Information

MACOI

NOT FOR PUBLICATION

25 April 1966

MEMORANDUM FOR CORRESPONDENTS

COMBAT PHOTOGRAPHY

1. The most personally sensitive information in any war is that pertaining to casualties. This is particularly true with respect to the notification of next of kin. It is for this reason that the services have been directed to insure that an officer of the service concerned personally delivers the first notification to the next of kin of a U. S. casualty.
2. During the war in Vietnam there have been instances in which the next of kin first have learned of the death or injury of a loved one through news media coverage. Such instances almost invariably involve visual media. Casualty photographs can show a recognizable face, name tag, distinctive item of jewelry or other identifying feature or items of apparel. Next of kin must learn about casualties first through official channels. The anguish that sudden recognition through unofficial news sources can cause is, without exception, out of all proportion to the "news value" of any commercial news photograph or film.
3. The casualty reporting and notification systems of the services are in effect around the clock and use high priority communications. Names of casualties whose next of kin have been notified can be verified by the MACV Information Office or by the Directorate of Information Services in the Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense (Public Affairs).
4. An equally important consideration is the fact that a man recently wounded usually is in a state of shock and often is under the effects of pain suppressants. Therefore, he is not normal in his actions, not in the mental condition to remember or be concerned about his right of privacy and not in the physical condition to protect himself. This situation places the burden of responsibility on the media to respect the right of privacy and to observe the principles of propriety and good taste. A man who has been hurt has the right to suffer in private.
5. In the war in Vietnam complete reliance has been placed on news media representatives. There has been no effort to impose restrictions on movement of audio-visual correspondents in the field or to require in country processing, review and editing of audio-visual material produced by accredited correspondents. We hope to preserve these freedoms and ask that correspondents cooperate by:
 - a. Not taking close-up pictures of casualties that show faces or anything else that will identify the individual.
 - b. Not interviewing or recording the voices of casualties until a medical officer determines that the man is physically and mentally able, and the individual gives permission.

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