

## CHAPTER V

### CENSORSHIP AND THE AMERICAN FORCES VIETNAM NETWORK

#### Introduction

The American Forces Vietnam Network (AFVN), like all other network and outlet affiliates of the world-wide American Forces Radio and Television Service (AFRTS), is sui generis. It is unique by virtue of its location in time and place. Its ten-year history occupies a period of relentless change, not only in the mass entertainment and news media it sought to emulate, but, more importantly, in the military organization and the people it served.

As demonstrated in the preceding chapters, AFVN is a military radio and television network; its primary function is to provide the local commander with an information outlet to his troops. It is also a broadcasting facility, operating in a wartime environment in a foreign country. It cannot help but reach countless thousands with its signal, and it cannot help but be interpreted as the official voice of the U. S. military in the Republic of Vietnam.

Background.--The issue of censorship at AFVN was brewing long before specific allegations were made public

by military journalists of the network in September, 1969, and, again, in January, 1970. One of the first suggestions appears in AFVN's 1968 Audience Survey, wherein a perceived dissimilarity between AFVN newscasts and other news sources was noted in respondents' comments. Addressing this problem, the survey indicated that:

. . . the problem of exclusion of certain types of news is delicate. Some form of news management, for security reasons, will always be necessary in a combat zone. Unrestricted and unmanaged flow will only provide the enemy with an additional source of intelligence. However, in those cases where no security is involved and where the civilian media are disseminating what might be considered embarrassing news items, their exclusion from military newscasts can only damage the credibility of the outlet.<sup>1</sup>

Randall J. Moody, former officer in charge of the network's news branch between June, 1968 and June, 1969, in supporting the allegations made in the autumn of 1969, drew upon his own experience to add credence to the charges with further examples of news items withheld from broadcasts at AFVN, dating from as early as September, 1968.<sup>2</sup>

In July, 1969, nine AFVN staff members assigned to the news branch signed a written request, addressed to the

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<sup>1</sup>U. S. Military Assistance Command, Vietnam, Officer in Charge, American Forces Vietnam Network (AFVN), "AFVN Audience Opinion--Research and Analysis," Lieutenant Commander James E. Wentz, U. S. Navy, comp., January, 1969, p. 56.

<sup>2</sup>Letter from Randall J. Moody, St. Paul, Minnesota, to Honorable Chalmers P. Wylie, U. S. House of Representatives, September 29, 1969. Copies of this and similar correspondence, cited infra, are held by the author of this study.

network news chief, inquiring formally of AFVN policy regarding what they perceived as censorship practices and the restrictions of widely accepted terminology in conjunction with war news reports received by the network.<sup>3</sup> When their request for a clear definition of policy was ignored, and over a month had elapsed, two of the AFVN personnel drafted letters to six congressmen and requested assistance in bringing to an end what they sincerely felt was unjustified news management regarding war news broadcast over the network. By the middle of September, the men had received only a polite acknowledgment from Senator Edmund Muskie.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>3</sup>The researcher notes that in early June, 1969, the MACV Office of Information (MACOI), Information Advisory Division in cooperation with the Republic of Vietnam Armed Forces (RVNAF), issued a document to all U. S. military information officers and information divisions (it may be presumed the document, "Let's Say it Right," was translated and distributed to similar RVNAF organizations), which attempted to clear up misleading terminology applied colloquially to various activities and organizations of the Vietnamese Army, combat operations, as well as terms applied to the enemy. AFVN, as a staff division of MACOI, and frequently interpreted as the voice of the U. S. military in Vietnam, was expected to comply. Source: Addendum to MACV Directive 360-4, April 18, 1989; acquired by the author at the Office of information for the Armed Forces, U. S. Department of Defense.

<sup>4</sup>Account is given in, Barbara F. Murphy, "Censorship and the Armed [sic] Forces Vietnam Network," unpublished academic study (carbon copy) for Journalism 99 course, Ohio Wesleyan University, Delaware, Ohio, April 14, 1970, pp. 5-13. (Hereinafter cited as Murphy, "Censorship and AFVN.") Copy held by author is uncorrected.

Charges of Censorship,  
September 1969

On September 17, 1969, Specialist five (Sp/5) Michael G. Maxwell contacted the CBS news bureau in Saigon, and agreed to a television interview; wherein he charged censorship at AFVN and listed specific examples.<sup>5</sup> At issue was the decision of MACV Office of Information to hold an announcement of a large U. S. troop withdrawal made by South Vietnam's Vice President, Nguyen Cao Ky, on the evening of September 15th, until an official announcement could be made from Washington.<sup>6</sup> The U. S. announcement was made by Presidential News Secretary Ron Ziegler during the night (Saigon time) and reported over AFVN the following morning. However, the Ky announcement was still withheld from AFVN'S audience. On the evening of September 16th, over twenty-four hours after the Ky announcement, President Nixon issued his own statement on the withdrawal which was immediately

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<sup>5</sup>Latter from Michael G. Maxwell, AFVN, Saigon to Honorable Chalmers P. Wylie, U. S. House of Representatives, September 23, 1969. Specialist Maxwell was twenty-two years of age; had four years professional experience at WCOL, Columbus, Ohio; awarded Army Commendation Medal for ten months service at AFVN prior to July, 1969; requested and granted six-month extension of Vietnam tour; assigned as Vietnam war news editor between July and September, 1969; and subsequently assigned as record librarian. See: Charles B. Moore, "Censorship of AFVN News in Vietnam," Journal of Broadcasting, XV (Fall, 1971), 387-395, for specific examples of censorship which Maxwell and others alleged.

<sup>6</sup>Commander-in-Chief, U. S. Pacific Forces (CINCPAC), "News Censorship Allegations Against AFVN," message, date-time-group (DTG) 080432Z OCT 69, unclassified, to Secretary of Defense, par. 5, subpar. D. (Hereinafter cited as CINCPAC message, October 8, 1969.)

Broadcast over the Vietnam AFRT service.<sup>7</sup> As the events were later to demonstrate, the Vice President of the Republic of Vietnam had erred in announcing the number of U. S. troops to be withdrawn: a contradiction to the number of troops specified by the President of the United States.<sup>8</sup> Following President Nixon's statement, both news reports of the two announcements were broadcast by the network.<sup>9</sup>

The event reinforced the views of some members of AFVN's news staff that American servicemen were receiving a sifted version of the news, and provoked Sp/5 Maxwell to take his case to the civilian media. A number of news reports, in addition to the CBS News broadcast, appeared in the American press, charging censorship of the Ky story,<sup>10</sup> and a mild--compared to the events in early 1970--controversy followed during which Representative Chalmers P. Wylie (Republican, Ohio) requested an investigation into the

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<sup>7</sup>Michael G. Maxwell, unpublished manuscript prepared at the request of the Defense Information School, Ft. Harrison, Indiana, to be used in The Military Journalist; article did not appear in publication; comments attached to correspondence from Randall J. Moody, December, 1971. (Hereinafter cited as, Maxwell, unpublished manuscript.)

<sup>8</sup>Letter from Randall J. Moody, St. Paul, Minnesota to Honorable Chalmers P. Wylie, U. S. House of Representatives, November 1, 1969.

<sup>9</sup>Maxwell letter to Representative Wylie, September 23, 1969, indicates the Ky announcement was withheld for twenty-eight hours.

<sup>10</sup>Ibid.

Allegations.<sup>11</sup> Senator J. William Fulbright, who was conducting his own investigation into the public relations aspects of *the* Defense Department's information functions,<sup>12</sup> finally responded on October 1st to the late August request from AFVN personnel. In letters to Sp/5 Maxwell and former AFVN staff member, David Kieffer, the Chairman of the U. S. Senate Committee on Foreign Relations indicated that future hearings were to be held on Vietnam policy, and that the men's complaints concerning suppression of news at AFVN would be borne in mind during the committee's study.<sup>13</sup>

The First Inspector General Investigation

Acting on behalf of his constituent, Specialist Maxwell, Congressman Wylie reviewed the report of the MACV Inspector General investigation which he had requested regarding the censorship allegations, and issued the following statement on October 22, 1969:

The report of the Inspector General is, in my judgment, a fair and unbiased account. It is critical of both sides, *if* we may use the term, that is those reporting

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<sup>11</sup>New York Times, October 2, 1969, p. 16; also in Stars and Stripes (Pacific), September 22, 1969, p. 6. Press coverage during this period was significantly less than in January, 1970.

<sup>12</sup>See: Senator J. W. Fulbright, The Pentagon Propaganda Machine (New York: Liveright Publishing Corp., 1970).

<sup>13</sup>Letter from Senator J. W. Fulbright, Chairman, U. S. Senate Committee on Foreign Relations to Army Specialist five (Sp/5) Michael G. Maxwell, AFVN News, Saigon, October 1, 1969.

the news over the network and those in charge of policy decisions. The report indicates a lack of communication between personnel within the unit.

The recommendations as to corrective actions are very good. I would particularly commend the recommendations of the Inspector General that a person qualified by experience and training in public broadcasting be assigned as officer in charge of that network.<sup>14</sup> There is, also, an indication that the recommendations have already been implemented in such a way that the problem should not reoccur. As far as I am concerned, the case is closed, unless further information comes to me that the recommendations are not being carried out.<sup>15</sup>

The report may have satisfied Congressman Wylie, but for Specialist Maxwell and former AFVN News Chief, Randall J. Moody, it was unequitable and biased and begged the question of censorship which had been raised at AFVN publicly for the first time.<sup>16</sup>

In the few months remaining in the year, AFVN set out to follow the recommendations based on the Inspector General investigation. For the first time since 1966, the network drew appropriately on DoD policy statements and

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<sup>14</sup>The report of the I. G. investigation did not recommend that the OIC of AFVN be replaced. It recommended that MACV assign mature, competent, and experienced personnel to the staff of AFVN. The Commander-in-chief, U. S. Pacific Forces (CINCPAC) observed, and apparently endorsed MACV action to secure ". . . the assignment of a qualified officer as Chief of the News Branch of AFVN." CINCPAC message, October 8, 1969, par. 1, subpar. D.

<sup>15</sup>Statement of the Honorable Chalmers P. Wylie, October 22, 1969, contained in correspondence from Randall J. Moody, December, 1971.

<sup>16</sup>Maxwell discounts virtually every statement made in the report and Moody rejected it as a "whitewash" in their personal correspondence to Congressman Wylie.

parent military organization directives to produce a new set of standing operating procedures which would assist in clearing up any misunderstandings regarding the internal operation of the military radio and television service.<sup>17</sup> An "open-door" policy was instituted to ensure immediate and direct access to superiors by those who were unable to achieve resolution of their problems within the established chain-of-command.<sup>18</sup> In addition, personnel action was instituted to replace the current news chief with the assignment of a more qualified officer.<sup>19</sup>

The Charges of Censorship,  
January 1970

On the surface, the problem as interpreted by military investigators was recognized; corrective action was taken; and the network appeared to settle back to its normal routine. However, on December 30, 1969, a report of a prior incident involving a breach of news policy at AFVN came to light; and, five days later, viewers in Saigon were startled

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<sup>17</sup>See Appendix C, for AFVN news policy and guidance.

<sup>18</sup>U. S. Military Assistance Command, Vietnam, American Forces Vietnam Network, "Standing Operating Procedures," November 11, 1969, sec. II, par. 10, p. 8.

<sup>19</sup>The assumption is made by this writer. Staff Sergeant Nick Palladino, U. S. Army, American Forces Radio and Television Service-Washington, former staff member of the American Forces Vietnam Network (AFVN), 1965-1970, in an interview on January 21, 1972 could not recall for certain that the News Branch Chief had been reassigned until after the January, 1970 controversy. See n. 14, p. 129, supra.



during the 11:00 P.M. newscast when the military announcer dramatically renewed the censorship controversy over the network's flagship television station.<sup>20</sup>

The prior incident involved a seemingly mild case of editorializing wherein the AFVN news announcer preceded, with comments of his own, an analysis by Eric Severeid of a recent speech by President Nixon. The military journalist was aware of Vice President Agnew's recent charges of instant analysis against commercial networks at home. He introduced the Severeid piece by noting the six-day lapse between the President's speech and the news commentator's analysis.<sup>21</sup>

The incident occurred on December 21, 1969; however, it was not made public until the end of the month, after the man, Air Force Sergeant Hugh Morgan, had been transferred to Detachment Two in Da Nang. Whether the new assignment was a direct result of the broadcast is unknown. At the time, the Officer in charge of AFVN, Lt. Col. James E. Adams, indicated that it might have been coincident, but that the Da Nang station did need a new man, and that the network shifted its people quite frequently.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>20</sup>Stars and Stripes (Pacific), January 5, 1970, p. 6.

<sup>21</sup>New York Times, December 30, 1969, p. 21.

<sup>22</sup>Ibid.; see supra, p. 76.

The incident of January 3, 1970, apparently sparked by the Morgan transfer in late December.<sup>23</sup> were an emotional appeal against alleged news censorship at AFVW, voiced by Specialist five (SP/5) Robert Lawrence.<sup>24</sup> The television news announcer broke away from his usual commentary over news films to charge that he and other enlisted men of the network's news branch were not free to tell the truth and that the audience was receiving a censored version of news relating to the Vietnam situation.<sup>25</sup>

The broadcast produced a precipitant reaction on the part of AFVN and MACV, congressman at home, and newsmen reporting on the event from Vietnam. The severely tarnished network duly reported the incident as the lead item in its 3:00 A.M. radio newscast three and one-half hours after the charges were made.<sup>26</sup>

The next day, Specialist Lawrence found himself initially denied legal counsel and escorted by the MACV Inspector General to the "Orwellian atmosphere" of an

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<sup>23</sup>Prepared testimony from Sergeant R, Hugh Morgan, USAF, Arlington, Virginia for Congressman John Moss and Committee, February 13, 1970.

<sup>24</sup>Former vice President of Georgia Association of Broadcasters, station manager of WDAX, McRee, Georgia, twenty-seven years of age; Murphy, "Censorship and AFVN:" p. 15,

<sup>25</sup>New York Times, January 5, 1970, p. 1.

<sup>26</sup>See: "Censorship Stew Boils in Vietnam," Editor and Publisher. CIII (January 10, 1970), 16; and in Stars and Stripes (Pacific), January 5, 1970, p. 6,

interrogation room where he was questioned regarding his allegations.<sup>27</sup>

As the investigation into the censorship charges got underway, the man was served court-martial charges for an unrelated incident involving his reported failure to obey an order and for being disrespectful in language to a superior officer.<sup>28</sup> Relieved of his position at AFVN, Lawrence was assigned, later in the month, as a chaplain's assistant in Kontum Province in the Central Highlands, 270 miles northwest of Saigon.<sup>29</sup>

In Washington, Senator Joseph D. Tydings (Democrat, Maryland) requested through the Pentagon that Air Force Sergeant Morgan, who had been transferred to Da Nang, be reinstated at network headquarters. The Senator announced his disagreement with the punishment being handed down by network administrators for what he believed was a harmless comment. <sup>30</sup>

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<sup>27</sup>"Flak from Officers," Time, XCV (January 19, 1970), 60.

<sup>28</sup>Stars And Stripes (Pacific), January 11, 1970, p. 6.

<sup>29</sup>Ibid., January 23, 1970, p. 6.

<sup>30</sup>Washington Post, January 29, 1970, p. 15. As in the event itself, Sergeant Morgan never once complained publicly--his case was made known by his friends--of his treatment. Although a constituent of Senator Tydings, he had not requested the Senator's aid. Stars and Stripes (Pacific), January 10, 1970, p. 6 (the newspaper frequently prints news from Vietnam on the same page each day).

Representative John E. Moss, chairman of the U. S. House Foreign Operations and Government Information Subcommittee, announced he would conduct his own investigation into the censorship allegations regarding AFVN in conjunction with a previously scheduled trip to Vietnam to look into information problems at MACV.<sup>31</sup>

The Second Inspector General Investigation

For the second time in less than four months, the MACV Inspector General completed an investigation regarding the censorship problem at AFVN and released a summary of the findings to correspondents on January 28, 1970. As in the previous investigation, the report concluded that AFVN was operating within the bounds of overall DoD policy and that censorship was not being employed at the military network. Specialist Lawrence had been required to list specific instances of news censorship which he and other personnel assigned to the network had observed. Over a six-month period, twenty-three items were cited, of which the investigation determined that a number of the news reports had actually been broadcast. Of those remaining, the Inspector General's report indicated that there were valid

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<sup>31</sup>New York Times, January 11, 1970, sec. IV, p. 5.

reasons for their exclusion over the U. S. military network operating in South Vietnam.<sup>32</sup>

In noting the primary basis for censorship allegations the report summarized the mission of the network and reiterated network news policy which entered into any editorial judgment regarding news broadcasts over AFVN:

The mission of the network is to inform U. S. military personnel. This mission also includes the responsibility of not mis-informing. . . . Moreover, AFVN has the inherent responsibility in the combat zone not to release or broadcast information which would be of value to the enemy.

Since AFVN is operating on frequencies authorized by the Republic of Vietnam, there are obligations to the sensitivities of the host country. Material which would offend the host country cannot be used. This does not, however, prohibit the use of material which is unfavorable to the host country. The application of these criteria requires judgments which in some cases could well eliminate unfavorable stories concerning the host country. The investigation revealed, however, that considerable commentary unfavorable to the Republic of Vietnam, which was originated by commercial sources, has been used on AFVN. The extent of such use led to the conclusion that material has not been arbitrarily eliminated because it may have been unfavorable to the host country.<sup>33</sup>

The report also announced, that since the validity of network news policy had been established, consistent with guidelines, any individual who did not feel he could comply with those policies had been or, in the future, would be transferred to a new assignment.<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>32</sup>U. S. Military Assistance Command, Vietnam, Office of Information (MACOI), "Summary of Findings--Inspector General Investigation into Operations of AFVN," memorandum for correspondents, January 28, 1970, 4 pages.

<sup>33</sup>Ibid., p. 3.

<sup>34</sup>Ibid., p. 4.

Representative Moss conducted his own investigation of AFVN in late February, 1970. While the final results have yet to be released,<sup>35</sup> an aid to Congressman Moss indicated that his committee's investigation found that censorship, as such, did not exist at AFVN; but that there were some instances of news management or the exercise of poor judgment in the handling of news of the Vietnam situation.<sup>36</sup>

An Analysis of the Controversy

Relationship of the problem.--At least two in-depth academic studies and numerous analytical articles have been written regarding the issue of censorship at AFVN. With few exceptions, discussion of the problem at the military radio and television network in Vietnam is often linked with related problems involving the Stars and Stripes, military unit publications and other AFRT outlets.<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>35</sup>Omaha World-Herald, December 5, 1971, p. 4: Rep. William Moorhead (Democrat, Pennsylvania) replaced John Moss (Democrat, California) as Chairman of the House subcommittee on Foreign Operations and Government Information in early 1971. An aid to Congressman Moorhead said in December, 1971, that there were no plans to revive the issue.

<sup>36</sup>Murphy, "Censorship and AFVN," p. 18, based upon letter from Jack Matteson, professional staff member for Congressman Moss.

<sup>37</sup>Donald R. Browne, "The World in the Pentagon's "Shadow," Educational Broadcasting Review, V (April, 1971), 42-45, relates that similar problems have occurred at the American Forces Network Europe (AFNE) where the network news programming policies come under the supervision of the Public Affairs Chief of the U. S. European Command. The author

Perhaps the very basis for the charges of censorship at AFVN is related to similar allegations against the Stars and Stripes (Europe) in early 1967.<sup>38</sup> Following the charges, the then Secretary of Defense, Robert S. McNamara, reacted with a strongly worded memorandum<sup>39</sup> to officials of the Department of Defense (DoD) in which he reaffirmed DoD policy of maximum disclosure of unclassified information to the American public and members of the armed forces:

Members of our Armed Forces constitute an important segment of this public. They are entitled to the same unrestricted access to news as are all other citizens. The calculated withholding of unfavorable news stories and wire service reports from troop information publications such as Stars and Stripes, or censorship of news stories or broadcasts over such outlets as Armed Forces Radio and Television Service, is prohibited.<sup>40</sup>

As in relating the problem at AFVN to other media of the U. S. military's internal information program, it is also difficult, if not impossible, to isolate the censorship controversy from the general, public dissatisfaction over

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also gives several examples of broadcast news items which have resulted in embarrassing incidents for the United States, and aptly identifies the significance of AFRT's secondary or "shadow" audience in Europe.

<sup>38</sup>Washington Star, May 1, 1967, p. 12.

<sup>39</sup>Washington Post, May 2, 1967, p. 18, describes the memorandum as "sharply worded," and cites Pentagon spokesman who acknowledged that the memorandum was prompted by the Stars and Stripes (Europe) and similar censorship problems in the past. See Appendix K, for complete text of memo.

<sup>40</sup>The Secretary of Defense, Memorandum for Secretaries of the Military Departments . . . , "Freedom of Information," May 1, 1967.

America's involvement in the Vietnam War.<sup>41</sup> Nor is it possible to divorce the issue at AFVN from the mutual distrust evidenced in military-press relations throughout the period.<sup>42</sup> Finally, internal conditions at the network, itself, must have had considerable bearing on the controversy which erupted in mid-September, 1969, and in early January, 1970.<sup>43</sup>

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<sup>41</sup>The first AFVN staff member to publicly charge censorship addressed the issue of dissatisfaction with the military's coverage of the war news as "symptomatic of the deep American division over the war." New York Times, October 14, 1969, p. 12.

<sup>42</sup>For two accounts of the frustrations on both sides, see: Alexander Kendrick, Prime Time: The Life of Edward R. Murrow (New York: Avon Books, 1969), pp. 547-554; and "Military Censorship Limits Vietnam News," Editor and Publisher, CI (March 2, 1968), 11. Bill Moyers, Listening to America (New York: Dell Publishing Co., Inc., 1971), p. 136, gives an appropriate summation in the words of a Vietnam reporter: "Everyone's telling the truth. Everyone over there is witnessing the truth as he sees it. But they all see it differently."

<sup>43</sup>The report of the first Inspector General Investigation (cited, supra, p. 126) into censorship charges at AFVN, suggested that a lax atmosphere had prevailed at the network for an undetermined period prior to June, 1969. Network and MACV Office of Information (MACOI) had a change in leadership personnel, followed at AFVN by a new command policy to improve military conduct, bearing, and appearance of AFVN personnel. Both the network officer in charge and the news branch chief were new at AFVN at this time (interview with Randall J. Moody, January 19, 1972). In the January, 1970, controversy, Specialist Lawrence was charged with failure to obey an order and for disrespectful language to a superior officer in an incident occurring five days before he charged censorship in a television broadcast at AFVN. In the man's defense, the court-martial charges were not filed until after his broadcast. It is also noted that prior to his broadcast, Lawrence had been told by MACOI officials to cease preparing voice-over-film (his voice



The issue.--The cries of "censorship" at AFVN are viewed primarily as vehicles for the expression of frustration on the part of some network personnel who vividly perceived a contradiction in the free flow of information voiced by McNamara and the handling of news regarding the Vietnam situation which took place at the military network: a variance of interpreted policy with actual operation.<sup>44</sup> Despite the allegations, two Inspector General investigations, two congressmen (all mentioned supra), and one independent analysis<sup>45</sup> have concluded that censorship, as

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CBS News film) reports concerning "black market" activities in Saigon and South Vietnam's President, Nguyen Van Thieu's exercise of formal censorship of newspapers (Murphy, "Censorship and AFVN," p. 16). The Inspector General report stipulated that Lawrence was engaged in editorializing and the use of unattributed material; however, it did not object to AFVN's use of CBS commentary and news film, when properly attributed (MACV, Inspector General, "Summary of Findings. . .," January 28, 1970, pp. 3-4). See Appendix C, under subjects. Dissatisfaction within the ranks, or in the words of Congressman Wylie, "lack of communication between personnel within the unit (pages 128-129, supra)" may well have been a driving factor in the censorship allegations.

<sup>44</sup>Prepared testimony from Sergeant R. Hugh Morgan, USAF, Arlington, Virginia for Congressman John Moss and Committee, February 13, 1970. In Murphy, "Censorship and AFVN," p. 1, the author indicates that the ". . . freedom of information doctrine under which AFVN claims to operate is merely pretense, not reality."

<sup>45</sup>Charles B. Moore, "An Analysis of Internal Censorship of News by the Military in Vietnam," study prepared for Telecommunications 531 course, published in Mass Communications Papers and Reports (Lubbock, Texas: Texas Tech University, April 13, 1971), 29 pages. (Hereinafter cited as Moore, "An Analysis of Internal Censorship . . .") Moore finds the "system" of MACOI control over AFVN to be at fault and recommends that it be corrected. Other comments appear

such, was not the issue at AFVN. What was at issue was the prescribed involvement of the MACV Office of Information (MACOI) regarding news of the U. S. military and other events of the Vietnam situation which were broadcast over the military network. Charles B. Moore concludes:

' . . . the evidence does not support that MACOI, as an entity, made a calculated effort to censor all, or even the amount charged, of AFVN's news output. While cases of censorship were exercised by some information officers and appeared to go beyond the defense of "editorial judgment," these were isolated and did not substantially deny AFVN the right to broadcast the news "like it is." 46

As announced in the second Inspector General Investigation report sensitivities of the host government, information that would aid or abet the enemy, and the safety and well-being of U. S. troops were all deemed to be legitimate considerations applied to the free flow of information to servicemen. In essence, these considerations formed the basis for editorial judgment in the selection of war news to be broadcast and each has its precedent prior to the controversy at AFVN.<sup>47</sup>

In reviewing the thirty-four specific allegations

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in body and notes, infra. The Moore study also appears under "Censorship of AFVN News in Vietnam," Journal of Broadcasting, XV (Fall, 1971), 387-395. Since the article is at some variance to the original as well as the account given in the body of this study, the differences are addressed in Appendix L.

<sup>46</sup>Ibid., p. 26.

<sup>47</sup>Browne, "The World in the Pentagon's Shadow."

assembled by Barbara F. Murphy,<sup>48</sup> the majority of the news items alleged to be censored can be attributed to the consideration regarding the host country's sensitiveness. The precedent for this consideration was probably set in World War II, but more recently in 1966. The United States was involved in attempting to cover information on hydrogen bombs which had been accidentally dropped in the Mediterranean Sea following a mid-air collision:

'Of course the path we followed was absurd by our government standards and the standards of our news media. But our actions were not governed by our standards alone; in this instance, as in many others, sovereign nations elsewhere were attempting to conduct their affairs according to their own best interests. When we are involved with those nations, we cannot always have our own way.'<sup>49</sup>

While the remainder of the items could--from a detached standpoint--be viewed as falling under the other two considerations, there is sufficient evidence to support the belief that mechanisms existed within the U. S. military in Vietnam to suppress news at AFVN which was deemed unfavorable to the military's image.

As demonstrated in Chapter IV,<sup>50</sup> AFVN was a staff

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<sup>48</sup>The list includes most public allegations known to this researcher and a number of allegations gathered in Murphy's personal correspondence, "Censorship and AFVN," pp. 9-12.

<sup>49</sup>Phil G. Goulding, Confirm or Deny (New York: Harper and Row Publishers, 1970), p. 49, cited by Fulbright, The Pentagon Propaganda Machine, p. 24. Goulding is former Assistant Secretary of Defense for Public Affairs.

<sup>50</sup>See supra, pp. 87-90.

division of the MACV Office of Information (MACOI), The Officer in Charge of AFVN was responsible to the Chief of MACOI for the operation of the military network. While it is true that MACOI was primarily concerned with public information--often interpreted and aptly labeled "public relations"<sup>51</sup>--the MACV staff division was also concerned with internal information programs of the command; chief among these was the operation of AFVN. In order to insure accuracy in the presentation of Vietnam war news, MACV Directive 360-4, governing the operation of AFVN, stipulated that such news be checked and cleared by MACOI before it was broadcast on any AFVN station. Herein lay the possible means to withhold information unfavorable to the U. S. military command. This requirement is interpreted as the major factor of the censorship controversy because of the basic conflict between the missions of AFVN and MACOI.<sup>52</sup>

According to Randall J. Moody, MACOI functioned more as a public relations agency and this ran counter to AFVN's function to present fair, accurate, and unbiased accounts of the day's events in Vietnam to American troops. Elaborating in December, 1969, on the conflicting missions of AFVN and its boss, Moody said:

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<sup>51</sup>Fulbright, The Pentagon Propaganda Machine.

<sup>52</sup>Randall J. Moody, "Preserving the Image in Vietnam," Freedom of Information Center Report No. 0010, University of Missouri at Columbia, August, 1970.

Defense Department policy statements specify that the U.S. serviceman is entitled to the same unrestricted access to news as are all other citizens. I believe the system of control of AFVN by the military information office in Vietnam (MACOI) is the basic cause of the censorship problem. . . . Regulations (MACV) Directive 360-4 require AFVN to "check and clear" every hard news story about Vietnam with the information office before it is aired. Ostensibly it is to be checked for accuracy, but actually it is checked by that office to insure nothing unfavorable or embarrassing to the military command, State Department or Saigon government is broadcast.<sup>53</sup>

Other military journalists at AFVN who made public censorship charges also felt that MACOI's power to withhold unfavorable news reports was the main issue in the controversy.<sup>54</sup> Press comment on the problem generally followed the same reasoning. Time Correspondent Burton Pines, after categorically dismissing censorship, indicated that the network was the victim of constant harassment and meddling by MACOI.<sup>55</sup> Robert Hodierne, former Vietnam correspondent for the Stars and Stripes (Pacific), described the absence of censorship at AFVN--tongue-in-cheek--and indicated that the main criterion applied in any editorial judgment at the network stood solely on the repercussions the broadcast of a given war news item would produce. As a result, ". . . the

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<sup>53</sup>Randall J. Moody, "DoD News Policy," letter to the editor, Editor and Publisher, CII (December 27, 1969), 7.

<sup>54</sup>Murphy, "Censorship and AFVN," p. 20.

<sup>55</sup>"Flak from Officers," Time, XCV (January 19, 1970), 60.

news just comes out sounding censored."<sup>56</sup> Senator Fulbright, in commenting on Hodierne's article, said that:

AFRTS possibly cannot be accused even of this venial sin, but it still controls the flow of information to a large number of Americans who depend on it to form their opinions and to know what is really going on.<sup>57</sup>

Thus, while charges of censorship at AFVN were repudiated, there appeared to be official intimidation or meddling in the free flow of information. The argument is a familiar one. A former chairman of the Federal Communications Commission, Newton N. Minow, and, more recently, Vice President Spiro T. Agnew have accused and have been accused of nothing less.

A rebuttal.--There are larger questions. There is something inherently wrong with criticism that feels the military should have little to say regarding war news broadcast over its own network to its own troops.<sup>58</sup> The U. S. military in Vietnam was not accused of censoring anything but war news or news of the Vietnam situation, in which it played the major role. In so doing this it was accused of favoring current military or government policy.<sup>59</sup>

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<sup>56</sup>New York Times, April 12, 1970, p. 13.

<sup>57</sup>Fulbright, Pentagon Propaganda Machine, p. 48.

<sup>58</sup>Similar thoughts are expressed in the Detroit News, commentary, January 8, 1970, p. 16.

<sup>59</sup>Randall J. Moody, "The Armed Forces Broadcast News System: Vietnam Version," Journalism Quarterly, XLVII (Spring, 1970), 27-30. AFVN and all AFRT networks and

The Commander of MACV had a mission; AFVN was his outlet for command information, news, and entertainment; yet, as voiced by some, he should have been prevented from interfering with what he believed was false or injurious to the main purpose of the mission.<sup>60</sup> Denying AFVN, or its immediate superior, MACOI, the right of editorial judgment is like suggesting to CBS that it should not delete material in poor taste or material which fails to measure up to network standards for accuracy.<sup>61</sup> It is just as fallacious to suggest that AFVN should somehow be barred from assuming an identification with the military way of thinking, even as it influenced the selection of war news.

Charles B. Moore, who conducted an independent analysis of the internal<sup>62</sup> censorship of news at AFVN, found that:

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outlets are probably guilty as charged. There is hardly a directive or instruction pertaining to AFVN regarding the handling of news which does not require that the ". . . policies and objectives of the United States and the Department of Defense are served by operations and activities of AFRT networks and outlets." CINCPAC Instruction 5720.12, April 29, 1968, par. 4, subpar. a(3), p. 3; also in: AFVN, "Standing Operating Procedures," November 7, 1969, sec. III, par. 1, subpar. b (16), p. 20 (see Appendix B), and AFVN, "Standing Operating Procedures," December 1, 1970, p. 4.

<sup>60</sup>Washington Post, editorial, January 8, 1970, p. 16.

<sup>61</sup>Interview with Colonel James E. Adams, former OIC, AFVN, 1969-1970, January 25, 1972.

<sup>62</sup>Information to servicemen within the military; external, information to the public regarding activities of the military.

The military adopted the position that since it owned the military media, it had an inherent right to act as editor and publisher.<sup>63</sup>

Someone had to; whether the military should have been involved with the broadcasting of news to servicemen is a moot point. Since World War II the United States military has taken upon itself the responsibility for informing its servicemen of news events which would otherwise be unavailable in foreign countries. Moore continues:

The military's basic defense was that it was exercising editorial judgment and control. In essence, it owns the "military media" and enjoys the same rights in the editorial decision-making process as do editors in commercial radio and television news operations. This is a valid argument and becomes even more so when one considers that AFVN spokesmen are "official" U. S. spokesmen, thus the clearing of doubtful civilian stories is to avoid "official" release of false or inaccurate information.<sup>64</sup>

In the past wars of this country, the military could logically assume that all efforts would be exercised to help win the war. But there was the problem in Vietnam of an undeclared war and a basically public relations organization in charge of a military radio and television network.

For the American Forces Vietnam Network, the real essence of the controversy could be viewed as one more contradiction of the Vietnam War.

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<sup>63</sup>Moore "An Analysis of Internal Censorship of News by the Military in Vietnam," p. 24.

<sup>64</sup>Ibid., p. 25.

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