

COMPLETE TEXT OF SP5 BOB LAWRENCE'S REMARKS ON AFVN-TV ON SATURDAY,
JANUARY 3, 1970 CHARGING THE U.S. COMMAND WITH CENSORING THE NEWS.

From an email message posted by Jim Allingham.

"In a closing note tonight, and looking into the decade ahead, as a broadcaster, I find myself making a self-evaluation of my experience in radio and television newscasting. And, in making this evaluation, I am compelled to rededicate myself to the job that I'm trying to do. As a newsman, I am dedicated to giving the public the news and events, worldwide and on the local level. I am pledged to tell the truth at all times and I will always tell the truth, either in the military or as a civilian. In the military in Vietnam, I have found that a newscaster at AFVN is not free to tell the truth and, in essence, to tell it like it is. MACV and the MACV Office of Information have seen to it that all those newscasters who are dedicated to their work are sent away to other areas. In some cases, off the air completely. Mike Maxwell charged that there was censorship at AFVN and now he's doing menial tasks in the record library and on FM radio. Hugh Morgan's gone too. Sent up-country and also off the air. That was another MACV request. Rick Frederickson leaves Tuesday. Rick tried to tell it like it is. Rick Frederickson is a dedicated broadcaster.

We have been suppressed and I'm probably in trouble for telling you, tonight, the truth. I hope you'll help stop censorship at AFVN and any American station under military rule.

Thank you and good-bye."

THE TV SPORTSCASTER, MARINE CORPORAL TOM SINKOVITZ
THEN ADDED THIS COMMENT:

"Thanks, Bob, in more ways than one."

THE IMMEDIATE AFTERMATH:

Lawrence, then 27, of Atlanta, Georgia and Sinkovitz, then 21, of Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, were immediately taken off the air and, for a short period, placed under "house arrest" in the day room building behind the studios. The Saigon press corps began arriving at the station shortly after the broadcast and were kept outside the gates for several hours. I was going to use an AP wire story on the event on my 2400 newscast, but was told that I could not go with a story until it had been cleared by MACV-IO.

I finally got clearance to use an "attributed" wire story on the 0300 newscast. I believe that either Paul Bottoms or Roger Ashworth was the jock that night. I did so under the glare of network TV cameras shooting from the AM radio studio through the window into the news booth. MACV immediately ordered that none of us at AFVN were allowed to comment to the American (or any other) media about the Lawrence/Sinkovitz incident. I don't remember ever hearing the order, so I gave on-camera TV interviews to Kenly Jones of NBC and Tony Sargent of CBS after I ended my shift at 0800. When I came into the station for my shift Sunday night, I told my news OIC (Capt Rowdy Williams) about the interviews. He passed the word up the chain. When my shift ended Monday morning, I was told that I was being sent "up-country" because a newsman was needed at Detachment 4 in Nha Trang. I was on a plane the next day. I spent the rest of my tour (January to July, 1970) as a TV newsman at Nha Trang.

Lawrence was ultimately reassigned as a chaplain's assistant and Sinkovitz, if I recall, was sent to Quang Tri, but not assigned to the Detachment there. For a while, TV news had to be taped and cleared by the brass for later broadcast. I don't remember how long this lasted. The furor lasted for several months. Lawrence was threatened with court-martial; he threatened to hire attorney's Melvin Belli and William Kuntzler, etc. Arkansas Senator William Fulbright and California Congressman John Moss conducted inquiries. Moss and his staffers even came to Vietnam. The MACV IG investigated. It was quite an ordeal for all.



STARS AND STRIPES

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3 July 1972 .

Lt. Lee W. Hauser, USNR
111-B Todd Street
Carrboro, North Carolina 27510

Dear Lt. Hauser:

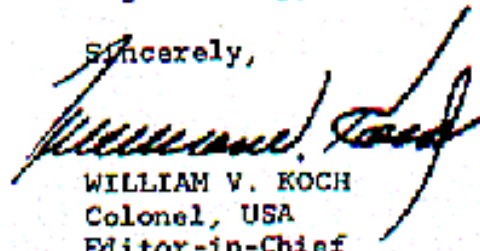
Thank you for sending me a copy of your thesis. I enjoyed reading it and will pass it to interested members of the staff.

During the period that some of the allegations of censorship of AFVN came up, I was the Chief of the News Branch at MACV and on several occasions I called AFVN's news staff to inform them of particular items of wire copy which were erroneous and should not be aired. A typical example that comes to mind was a UPI story of about 7 May 1969 which said that the 25th Infantry Division would be going home within 60 days. Needless to say, the 25th did not go home till sometime after that date. However, troop withdrawals did begin early in July.

In almost every instance that I knew of where AFVN was told not to run an item, it was because the news item was inaccurate. I can recall no instance during my tenure there, where the network was told not to run an item because it might offend host country sensitivities.

I think you've hit the nail on the head in your summary and again, I appreciate your sending me a copy of this paper.

Sincerely,



WILLIAM V. KOCH
Colonel, USA
Editor-in-Chief

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