

# Reporting on War in the 21st Century

## Handout #2: Pentagon Pool Reporting Information

*from the Committee to Protect Journalists*

[http://www.cpj.org/Briefings/2001/new\\_war\\_01/new\\_war\\_01.html](http://www.cpj.org/Briefings/2001/new_war_01/new_war_01.html)

WASHINGTON VIEW:

Pentagon sets guidelines for pool reporting

By Frank Smyth

Washington, October 2, 2001—The U.S. Department of Defense has promised to provide journalists covering future military operations with the "best access possible" but warned that logistics could be difficult since military operations will be "all over the map."

DOD officials said they have no plans to implement any form of censorship, but refused to rule out censorship as a possibility. When asked whether DOD would demand prior review of copy filed by pool reporters, a senior DOD official said, "I cannot guarantee that it won't occur."

In a September 28 meeting with bureau chiefs in Washington, D.C., Department of Defense (DOD) spokesperson Victoria Clarke explained the Pentagon's guidelines for pool reporting. Media pools will be noncompetitive, and each member of any specific pool will be required to share information with colleagues from other media. Pool reporters will also be required to "remain with the pool escort officers or assigned units" until the pool is officially disbanded.

The transcript of the meeting has been posted on the Internet.

[http://www.defenselink.mil/news/Sep2001/t09302001\\_t0928asd.html](http://www.defenselink.mil/news/Sep2001/t09302001_t0928asd.html)

DOD officials told CPJ that they would seek to preserve the security of operations and the safety of troops by ensuring that personnel who speak with journalists do not divulge classified information. All DOD sources will request that journalists withhold any information that could conceivably jeopardize either the security or safety of U.S. personnel or operations.

The guidelines for pool reporters covering a particularly sensitive military operation could include the submission of copy prior to publication. The review would be used to ensure that reports do not include information that could potentially violate operational security.

DOD officials stressed that the greatest obstacle to providing access for the press will be logistical, since many of the military actions are expected to be carried out by clandestine Special Forces detachments. "The operations may last hours, three days, or a week," said one official.