

Covering letter from Lt Col John G. Rose, MacV IO:

Here are three tries at a policy which would cover the subject that we discussed the evening of 20 June. Please take a look at them and give me your thoughts next week. Please let me know when we can get together to kick this around again.

Subject: Visits to Combat Area by Female Correspondents

1. Female correspondents are not authorized to remain with, or accompany, U.S. units overnight in exposed forward positions or areas. They are authorized to visit or accompany during daylight hours any unit or area which commanders authorize for male correspondents.

2. Accredited female correspondents have the same rights and privileges as male news media representatives in covering the war in Vietnam, to include combat action. However, in certain tactical situations there is an understandable concern and an inevitable sense of responsibility on the part of commanders when a woman is present. In these situations it is unfair to place an extra burden on the commander. He must be free to concentrate on his mission and the combat performance of his unit, without the distraction of concern over the presence of a woman with his unit. Therefore, female news correspondents will not be kept overnight at forward, exposed positions. It is recognized that there may be unexpected situations when it will not be possible or practicable to get a woman correspondent out of an exposed forward position before nightfall. However, it is command policy that commanders will make all reasonable efforts to send any female correspondent back to a more secure area for the period of darkness when exposed forward positions are most vulnerable to strong and perhaps overwhelming enemy attack.

3. Female news media representatives are to be accorded the same treatment as their male counterparts with the following exception: Female news media reps will not be authorized to remain overnight in forward exposed positions when in the opinion of the local commander, their presence will cause undue concern on the part of the position commander. This is not to be interpreted as restricting female correspondents from covering any daytime action which a commander would normally allow male correspondents to cover. Commanders must not interpret this policy as restricting females from visiting forward exposed areas during daylight when there is a reasonable expectation of extraction before dark.

To: Military Assistance Command, Vietnam

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From: Accredited Women Correspondents

We, the undersigned, do not agree to or give approval to any proposed directives or messages which establish rules for us that are different from those for male correspondents. We cite the following reasons:

~~Any~~ Any directive or regulation that establishes separate treatment for women is discriminatory and interferes with free access to the news by one group of accredited correspondents.

—The 1964 Civil Rights Act prohibits job discrimination on the basis of sex.

—MACV rules governing public release of military information already state, "correspondents may find that, at times, their movements may be restricted in certain tactical areas. These restrictions are kept to a minimum but they may be applied by a commanding officer when in his opinion the nature of an operation warrants such action." We see no necessity for an arbitrary change in or addition to this rule.

—The proposed directives use the words "forward and exposed" to describe areas where women correspondents will not be allowed to stay overnight. In Vietnam every area can be defined as "exposed"; downtown Saigon has been shelled, the 25th Infantry Division base camp at Cu Chi has been mortared, the Danang press center has received sniper fire, etc. Overzealous commanders, anxious to be sure they comply with the directive, could keep women out of any area in Vietnam. Such reactions would seriously inhibit our coverage and prevent us from functioning as effective correspondents.

—The tradition of highly professional coverage by courageous women war correspondents should not be destroyed by short-sighted directives. There is no precedent for such a ruling.

—If military authorities successfully restrict the movements of women correspondents, they may try to restrict movements of male correspondents next.

Signed:

Signed:

Cathy Leroy
Associated Press, Paris Match

Denby Fawcett
Honolulu Advertiser

Kate Webb
United Press International

Ann Bryan
Overseas Weekly

Linda G. Martin
New York Times Magazine, Today's Health
Mademoiselle, Newsweek, Macmillan Inc.

Karen S. Peterson
American Broadcasting Company,
Chicago Tribune

Anne L. Morrissey
American Broadcasting Company

Gay Dillin
Christian Science Monitor

Jurate Kasickas
North American Newspaper Alliance,
Insiders Newsletter, Darbininkas

cc: The Honorable Robert S. McNamara
Secretary of Defense

The Honorable Ellsworth Bunker
American Ambassador, Republic of Vietnam

General Creighton W. Abrams
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Mr. Barry Northian
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Senator Sam J. Ervin Jr.
Subcommittee on Constitutional Rights

Senator Margaret Chase Smith