



DEPARTMENT OF THE AIR FORCE  
HEADQUARTERS WARNER ROBINS AIR LOGISTICS CENTER (AFMC)

Feb. 11, 2004

TO: Editors and News Directors

SUBJ: Public Affairs Accident/Incident Response

Below is public affairs guidance on how the media should respond if there is a military accident or incident on or off base.

- Public affairs' primary responsibility is to provide unclassified information to the public as quickly as possible whenever an incident occurs.
  - Air Force guidance is to provide an initial release to news media within one hour following notification that an incident has occurred.
  - If deaths have occurred, names will not be released until next of kin (NOK) have been notified through military channels.
  - Names of injured may be released as soon as verification of identities and severity of injuries are determined; however, survivor's names will be withheld if release of this information could identify deceased member(s) before NOK notification takes place.
  - All incidents are investigated by a board of qualified officers to determine cause; no speculation or comment beyond this statement will be provided.
- The site of an incident (on base or off base) determines how media will be dealt with when they arrive.
  - **On base:** media requesting access to the site will be escorted to a safe viewing location by public affairs when: the on-scene commander determines the area is safe, classified information or equipment at the site has been secured, and deceased members have been removed (or covered if removal is not possible).
  - **Off base:** media are expected to be at the incident site by the time military response forces arrive. Normally, access to these locations is controlled by civilian law enforcement agencies. Public affairs seeks the cooperation of all media representatives on the following items:
    - Locate and deal with the public affairs representative at the site.



- Do not take photographs showing bodies (or body parts) out of consideration for the families of those involved.
  - Do not disturb or remove any equipment or parts, except to rescue individuals.
  - If informed that classified materials are present, surrender all exposed film for processing by the military. A receipt will be given and all unclassified negatives will be returned as soon as the film is processed.
  - If media refuse to surrender film, the assistance of civilian law enforcement officials will be requested to prevent further photography and to collect all photographic media, including exposed and unexposed film.
  - If civilian law enforcement assistance is unavailable, the senior Air Force official present will contact the managing editor of the publication or television station and explain the situation to them, advising that failure to return classified information to military authorities violates federal law (18 U.S. Code 793(e), 795, and 797).
- Everyone at Robins works very hard to prevent incidents from occurring; however, our mission requires the flying of aircraft and keeps this potential ever present. When an incident occurs, the cooperation of public affairs, media, and civilian/military law enforcement, fire and rescue specialists will speed the flow of timely and accurate information to the public.

If you have any questions on this guidance, please feel free to call public affairs at 926-2137. This letter is provided as a courtesy.



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