



DEPARTMENTS OF THE ARMY AND AIR FORCE
JOINT FORCE HEADQUARTERS WISCONSIN
WISCONSIN NATIONAL GUARD
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NGWI-GPA

MEMORANDUM FOR Department of Military Affairs

SUBJECT: Public and Media Relations – TAG Policy Memorandum 5

1. As a government agency, the Wisconsin National Guard (WING) is compelled to inform the public about its activities. WING utilizes the news media and other platforms, such as social media, along with community outreach and engagement to ensure the organization's messages and mission purpose are communicated to the public and stakeholders. WING's public relations policy is to release all information about organizational activities honestly, accurately, and in a timely manner. Release of information will occur within operational security guidelines and according to applicable legal guidelines such as the Privacy Act and the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA) which govern Servicemember information release. WING's policy of *maximum disclosure, minimum delay* applies equally to favorable and unfavorable information.
2. Upon request and in accordance with the State Open Records law and the Freedom of Information Act, the public will receive substantiated, unclassified information that is not protected by the Privacy Act or HIPAA. For the protection and integrity of investigations, victims, and due process for Servicemembers accused of misconduct, the WING will delay releasing information to the public until ongoing investigations or pending legal matters are complete and resolved.
3. Casualty information will not be released until 24 hours after next-of-kin notification, approval by state headquarters (Army or Air), and coordination with the WING Government and Public Affairs Office (GPA).
4. Commanders at all levels must use good judgment during media interaction and report all news media contact to the WING GPA or the public affairs section for the respective Major Subordinate Command (MSC) or Wing.
5. Although units must ensure WING GPA has visibility of all media interaction/releases, the following units have release authority via their respective public affairs offices/sections: 112th Mobile Public Affairs Detachment, 115th Fighter Wing, 128th Air Refueling Wing, 157th Maneuver Enhancement Brigade (MEB), and 32d Infantry Brigade Combat Team (IBCT).
6. Serious incidents attract immediate news media attention and can result in intense media scrutiny. Generally, the WING GPA will develop an official statement of the facts and begin responding to media inquiries. General guidance is below, though the WING GPA will usually

push specific instructions and guidelines for an incident or mobilization to leadership and troops via the Joint Operations Center (JOC) or chain of command.

7. General Guidelines:

a. **Official Spokesperson:** Only designated public affairs officers and other authorized personnel are authorized to speak on behalf of the military or provide official statements to the media. Any requests for interviews, comments, or statements from the media should be referred to the WING GPA.

b. **Personal Statements:** While Servicemembers and employees are entitled to their personal opinions, these opinions should not be expressed as official military positions. Any statements made should clearly distinguish between personal viewpoints and the official stance of the Department of Defense, or the WING.

c. **Social Media:** When engaging with the media or discussing military-related topics on personal social media accounts, Servicemembers and employees must be aware of the potential consequences. Posts should avoid discussing classified information, ongoing operations, or any matter that could undermine national security.

d. **Respect for the Media:** While maintaining the integrity of military operations, Servicemembers and employees should also respect the role of journalists in a democratic society. Engaging with the media in a professional and courteous manner helps promote public understanding and support for the Armed Forces.

e. **Media Interaction:** Do not discuss operationally sensitive information or disclose information protected by the Privacy Act (for example, social security numbers or personal information about other Servicemembers, employees, or their families).

- (1) Do not discuss political or foreign policy matters.
- (2) Do not answer “what-if” or hypothetical questions or give opinions, and do not speculate.
- (3) Be brief. Use simple language. Avoid military acronyms and jargon.
- (4) Everything you say is “on the record.” There is no such thing as “off the record.”
- (5) Refer the reporter to the WING GPA.

f. If you accidentally disclose anything classified, ask the reporter not to use it. Report the incident to a public affairs office (PAO) and your higher headquarters. **Do not confiscate any material or equipment from the media.**

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- g. Do not try to cover up embarrassing events under a cloak of security classification.
 - h. Maintain a polite, calm, and professional attitude, even when news media are aggressive or when questions seem silly. Do not allow yourself to be badgered or harassed. Refer the reporter to the WING GPA.
 - i. Public affairs officers are available to assist 24/7. Call for help.
8. Any news conference will be coordinated through WING GPA. News conferences will only be held when a situation warrants and with the Adjutant General's approval.
9. News media activities and visits at a WING facility or installation will be coordinated through the WING GPA or the installation PAO. Any media activities planned for Fort McCoy must be coordinated with both the WING GPA and the Fort McCoy PAO.
10. Units considering undertaking new major public information or internal communication campaigns within their chains of command should contact the WING GPA for coordination and approval to ensure adherence to policy, prevent duplicated effort, and ensure best practices are shared.
11. Unit leaders, Servicemembers, and/or employees wishing to meet with local media or editorial boards, community groups, or other external organizations should coordinate their efforts with WING GPA for assistance, guidance, support, and approval before the meeting or event.
12. Servicemembers and employees are encouraged to interact with media with PAO guidance, support, and approval. Interacting with media is an excellent way to communicate the importance of the WING's mission, who we are, what we do, and why we matter.
13. The point of contact for this policy is the WING GPA at (608) 242-3050 or (608) 242-3048.

DAVID W. MAY, Brigadier General
Interim Adjutant General of Wisconsin