

Dealing with media isn't painful

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You never know when you might find yourself in a situation where you might end up in front of a camera. It could be in reference to your involvement in the Reserve, or in a community or civic activity. In either case, here are some helpful hints to keep in mind if you ever have the opportunity to go in front of the camera:

Relax and be yourself – The reporter is no different than you. He or she is just doing a different job. Keep in mind that the reporter probably doesn't have a lot of military background.

Always tell the truth, never lie – Tell the reporter you don't have an answer. Do not make up an answer to make yourself look good.

Answer one question at a time.

Avoid military jargon – Civilians don't know the meaning of APFT, METL or other phrases and acronyms. Keep your language simple and easy. If you must use a military term, explain what that term means.

Only discuss those things that you have direct responsibility or knowledge – a squad leader can comment on the teamwork of his soldiers, but could not comment on the commanding general's staff meeting.

If you don't know don't guess or speculate – When you hear the words "what if" being asked, the only possible answer is one that involves speculation. Don't second-guess, predict or speculate.

Always try to end your comments in a positive way – This is your



Sgt. 1st Class Corena Rouse was interviewed by journalist Barry Benson after Rouse was named the Army Reserve's top Drill Sergeant.

chance to tell your unit's story.

If you are in a leadership role, here are some additional considerations if the media is present in your area of operation:

Take care of the media – Reporters that feel welcome are more likely to help portray your unit in a positive light.

There is no such thing as "off the record."

Do not try to dodge the media – They will think you are trying to hide something.

Do not attempt to be a subject matter expert in something you know nothing about.

Don't answer hypothetical "what

if" questions.

Do not use the phrase "no comment." – A more appropriate comment would be "We don't comment on future operations," or "I'm not qualified to respond to your question," or "That information is classified and I can't discuss it."

Don't lose your temper if the reporter asks what you consider a silly or inappropriate question. Such questions are usually rooted in ignorance, not malice.

Do not discuss operational capabilities, exact numbers or troop strengths, numbers/types of casualties, types of weapons systems or future plans. Instead, use more general terms such as "approximate," "light," "heavy," etc.

Don't discuss operational issues, such as mob sites, final destinations, unit readiness - If they do ask an operationally specific question, don't answer it but make sure you tell them why.

Don't repeat a negative phrase in response to a negative question. Example: Q - "Since your unit is poorly trained, can you really deploy?" A - "We're well trained and ready to go."

Do not allow media to videotape recognizable landmarks nearby, sensitive equipment, interior of tactical operations centers or other sensitive areas.

In summary, if you have the chance be open and sincere. If the media contacts you, make sure you get their name, their organization, and a number where we can call them. Make a record of the contact, and then forward it through channels to the Division Public Affairs Office.