



FORSVARSDEPARTEMENTET

*Norwegian Ministry of Defence*



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# INTRO

## PART 1

**SINCE 1998** the Norwegian Ministry of Defence has worked with partners in East and Central Europe in the communication field. Based on seminars in Oslo, Riga and Bucharest, this guide presents ways to handle information challenges and the media.

# SHARING THE CHALLENGE

**WE WISH** to express our gratitude to the Ministries of Defence of Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania and Slovakia. It has been a pleasure for the Norwegian Ministry of Defence to establish contact with all of you and to plan and organise seminars together with you.

Through these seminars, ministry staff and members of the armed forces working in the information field have met across borders and worked together for the first time. We appreciate the open exchange of views on important media and communication issues, and the personal contact that we have experienced during these seminars. Through your participation and support you have shown us that our endeavours in promoting openness and transparency have been worthwhile. We believe that the project in a small but valuable way strengthens the NATO alliance and helps to achieve Partnership for Peace goals.

The many Bulgarian, Romanian, Polish, Czech, Hungarian and Norwegian journalists who took time out of their busy schedules to join the debates also deserve a hearty thank you. Thanks to your enthusiastic participation and well-placed remarks, both ministry staff and members of the armed forces are learning how to improve co-operation with the media and to better satisfy democratic needs.

An extra burden was put on the Ministries of Defence of Latvia and Romania, as two of the 2001 seminars took place in these countries. A special thank you goes to our friends in Riga and Bucharest for receiving seminar participants so warmly and for going out of their way to accommodate every practical need.

This media and communication project devoted to openness will carry on. We look forward to continuing our cooperation with our NATO partners and PfP members.



Kåre Helland-Olsen

Ass. Director General  
Head of the Information Section  
Norwegian Ministry of Defence

# PARTNERS WITH THE MEDIA

“We are not your enemy,” said a journalist with long experience in defence and security policy reporting. He was addressing government and military representatives at an international seminar held by the Norwegian Ministry of Defence outside Oslo. He stressed that an open dialogue between governments, citizens and the media is as crucial as ever. Members of the press from Poland, Hungary, the Czech Republic and Norway nodded at their colleague’s remark. During the seminar, they demanded speed, availability and frankness from government offices.

A Navy Commander who heads the Information Branch of the Armed Forces of Norway spoke at a similar seminar that the Norwegian Ministry of Defence held in Riga. He claimed that there are few professions more likely to misunderstand each other than journalists and military personnel. The differences between these two professions’ *raison d’être* are mind-boggling, he said.

At a similar seminar in Bucharest, a journalist from a Romanian daily mostly praised her contacts at the Ministry of Defence and in the Armed Forces. “But I have had my fill of dull Ministry of Defence communiqées” she said, and quoted a press release: “The Minister of Defence went on an official visit to a neighbouring country to strengthen the collaboration between the two armies.” The public will not read our newspapers if this is the type of story they get, she added. As she sees it, readers want first-hand information and analysis of events.

In this guide you will find ample advice on how to improve media-government relations. Based on

the seminar presentations and debate, the guide outlines ways of creating an information strategy as an organisational basis for dealing with the media, and how the Internet can be a useful tool in publicising your goals, expertise and activities. The spokespersons of the Norwegian Ministry of Defence and of the Armed Forces share their experiences and their efforts to achieve successful co-operation with the media. Two experts in media handling give you advice on how to get even your most difficult messages across. A physician who specialises in stress management emphasises the need for support during crisis situations. Last but not least, an experienced war and political correspondent gives his no-nonsense views on how to satisfy a reporter’s need for information. His remarks reveal the pride and sense of professional responsibility a reporter feels.

As public servants we have a legal duty to be open, honest and helpful to members of society. The way in which countries practice openness varies, but the public demand for transparency is increasing. In Norway we have had a Freedom of Information Act since 1970. Documents may be withheld from the

public eye only if they jeopardise national or international security, contain personal information or form part of bidding rounds or budgetary planning. Strictly internal correspondence and reports not yet finished are also exempt. Once the ministries’ annual budgets have been adopted by parliament, the documents should be released.

The Norwegian Freedom of Information Act states that access is the rule, secrecy the exception. It has become a popular tool for journalists who want access to reports and letters produced by government offices. Anyone may subscribe to the daily Internet-publicised list of a ministry’s outgoing correspondence and ask for a faxed copy. On average, we release two out of three documents, usually immediately or within three days. Every month,

journalists, researchers and others ask the Ministry of Defence to release some 300 documents. We do not make these documents public unless someone asks for them specifically. Letters and reports released according to our Freedom of Information Act should not be confused with our ongoing information activities and publications.

We began holding seminars on openness towards the media in 2000 to support the democracy building of our Central and East European partners. Three-day seminars have been held in Oslo, Riga and Bucharest. Altogether nine countries outside or in NATO have so far participated. As organiser we have learned much about our common challenges in the media and public information field. Following the Chatham House\* rule of openness, or rather, openness with discretion, the seminars give participants an opportunity to discuss topics quite freely. This report therefore focuses on the information given during the presentations. Rest assured that the debates were vigorous!

Over three days, some 40 civilian and military journalists, officers, diplomats and civil servants told each other where the shoe pinches in the relations between the media and government institutions. Sadly, many journalists feel that they are a constant annoyance to representatives of ministries and armed forces.



Elisabeth Bødtker Larsen  
Director General  
Norwegian Ministry of Defence

One of the basic aims of Partnership for Peace is to promote transparency in national defence planning, military budgeting and the democratic control of national armed forces. We need the media as our partners to help in communicating with the public on these often complicated issues.

We are grateful for the co-operation of Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania and Slovakia. Our project started out with seminars “In the Spirit of Partnership for Peace”, which means that they were open to a few invited Partnership for Peace countries only. In 2001, the project expanded to include the new NATO members.

Together we are creating a true partnership which aims to open up to the media – and thereby to the people we serve.

*\*According to the Chatham House Rule, participants are free to use the information received, but neither the identity nor the affiliation of the speakers, nor that of any other participant may be revealed; nor may it be mentioned in which context the information was received.*



*Elisabeth Bødtker Larsen*

## PARTNERSHIP FOR PEACE

Partnership for Peace (PfP), is a major programme of bilateral cooperation between NATO and individual Partner countries. Currently there are 26 PfP countries\*. The basic aim of PfP is to promote transparency in national defence planning and military budgeting and the democratic control of national armed forces. PfP also seeks to develop the capacity for joint action between forces from Partner countries and those of NATO member countries, for example, in peacekeeping or disaster-response operations. Enshrined in the PfP Framework Document is a commitment by the Allies to consult bilaterally with any Partner country that perceives a direct threat to its territorial integrity, political independence or security.

Individual Partnership Programmes are drawn up between NATO and Partner countries from an extensive menu of activities – the PfP Work Programme – according to each country’s specific interests and needs. The biennial programme contains more than 2 000 activities, ranging from large military exercises down to small workshops. Areas covered range from the purely military to defence-related cooperation in fields such as crisis management, peacekeeping, civil emergency planning, air-traffic management and armaments cooperation.

Military representations within Partner country diplomatic missions to NATO ensure that Partner country officers are involved in the daily work of PfP. To help coordinate PfP training and exercises, a Partnership Coordination Cell was established at Supreme Headquarters Allied Powers Europe (SHAPE). An International Coordination Centre has also been set up at SHAPE to provide briefing and planning facilities for all non-NATO countries contributing troops to NATO-led peace-support operations in the Balkans.

*\*Albania, Armenia, Austria, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Bulgaria, Croatia, Estonia, Finland, Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Georgia, Ireland, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyz Republic, Latvia, Lithuania, Moldova, Romania, Russia, Slovakia, Slovenia, Sweden, Switzerland, Turkmenistan, Ukraine and Uzbekistan. (Source: NATO’s home page, January 2002)*



*As PI Officer in the Armed Forces of Norway, 6<sup>th</sup> Division, Lt Gry Remme handles the media with care.*



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