



PUBLIC AFFAIRS

ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF DEFENSE  
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20301

*AW*  
15 JAN 1976

*Bill See me*

13 JAN 1976

MEMORANDUM FOR THE SECRETARY OF DEFENSE

SUBJECT: Public Information Principles -- ACTION MEMORANDUM

Apart from the requirements established by the Freedom of Information Act, it has been customary for the Secretary of Defense to issue in his own name a directive which sets forth the principles under which the Department will carry out its responsibility for informing the American people. Directives signed by Secretaries Laird, Richardson and Schlesinger are at Tabs B, C and D.

This directive has considerable utility. It not only serves as a guide for senior military and civilian officials but it is an important expression of your personal commitment to the concept of the public accountability of public officials. It is made available to members of Congress, college students, journalists and it becomes a basic point of reference for those who support your public information policies in speeches and other public forums.

It is important that the document be signed and released so that you are on the record prior to your first appearance on the Hill, because many members of Congress are aware that your predecessors have expressed themselves in a similar manner.

Recommend you sign that memorandum at Tab A for release prior to January 27.

*William I. Greeney, Jr.*  
William I. Greeney, Jr.

Enclosures

SEC DEF HAS SEEN



*OK*  
*(W)*  
*2/10/76*



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MEMORANDUM FOR CORRESPONDENTS:

March 5, 1969

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Secretary of Defense Melvin R. Laird issued the following memorandum March 4, 1969:

MEMORANDUM FOR Secretaries of the Military Departments  
Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff  
Director of Defense Research and Engineering  
Assistant Secretaries of Defense  
Assistants to the Secretary of Defense  
Directors of the Defense Agencies

SUBJECT: Public Information Principles

To assure that the American people are fully informed about matters of national defense, I intend that the Department of Defense shall conduct its activities in an open manner, consistent with the need for security. This means that unclassified information, other than that exempted by the Freedom of Information Act, must be readily accessible to the public and the press. Because of the importance I attach to this matter, I want to state certain principles which I expect to be followed in the conduct of public affairs activities of this Department.

1. Our first concern must be the security of the United States and the safety of our Armed Forces. Therefore, information which would adversely affect the security of our country or endanger our men should not be disclosed.
2. The provisions of the Freedom of Information Act (5 USC 552) will be supported in both letter and spirit.
3. No information will be classified solely because disclosure might result in criticism of the Department of Defense. To avoid abuse of classification procedures, we must adhere strictly to the criteria set forth in Executive Order 10.04.
4. Our obligation to provide the public with accurate, timely information on major Department of Defense programs will require, in some instances, detailed public information planning and coordination within the Department and with other government agencies. However, I want to emphasize that the sole purpose of such planning and coordination will be to expedite the flow of information to the public. Propaganda has no place in Department of Defense public information programs.



MORE

Therefore, I direct that each addressee review all pertinent directives, policies and public information plans to insure prompt and complete compliance with these principles. Those which do not meet the foregoing criteria will be revised or rescinded.

The Assistant Secretary of Defense (Public Affairs) is responsible for advising and assisting me in the fulfillment of these public information principles throughout the Department of Defense.

/s/ Melvin R. Laird

END

