

October 10, 2025

Sent via email

Sean Parnell
Assistant to the Secretary of War for Public Affairs
1400 Defense Pentagon
Washington, D.C. 20301

Dear Mr. Parnell,

On behalf of the Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ), a nonprofit, nonpartisan press freedom organization, we write to express our concern over updated policies and procedures for journalists who report on the Pentagon, as outlined in the Implementation of New Media In-brief revised memorandum.

We urge you to rescind the new restrictions, including limiting movement within the Pentagon building, revoking credentials for seeking information, and requiring reporters to affirm their understanding in writing. We appreciate the revisions dated October 6 to clarify the September 18 memorandum, especially that reporters are not required to submit writing for Department approval. However, we are still concerned that the policy would restrict independent reporting activity.

Requiring signed acknowledgment in exchange for credentials could chill independent reporting. These policies will alienate journalists from the workings of the Department and impede access to information, making it more difficult for reporters to explain American military policy domestically and internationally. Additional plans to move the press corps work space will further confine reporters.

The memo offers no evidence of security concerns under current rules to justify the policy change. The press corps follows professional standards and its members often represent some of the most experienced and distinguished reporters from their respective outlets. They already wear badges and only access unclassified spaces when unescorted. Seeking comment from the Department on a forthcoming story is standard practice. Any new requirement to discuss specific materials used with the Department prior to publication would be highly unusual and could curtail reporting.

Limiting press access to federal agencies suppresses freedom of speech and violates the First Amendment. Pentagon reporters inform the public on matters of vital public interest, including decisions on policy and personnel that impact national security and the safety of all Americans. Journalists have played an essential role in telling stories of the military for decades, even embedding directly with troops in conflict zones. These reporters have built trust with members of the military and provide their audiences, foreign and domestic, with an essential understanding of the role of American security forces. Domestically, it is vital that journalists have access to the Pentagon's operations to maintain transparency and accountability to the taxpayers.

We would welcome the opportunity to answer any questions or discuss this matter. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,
The Committee to Protect Journalists

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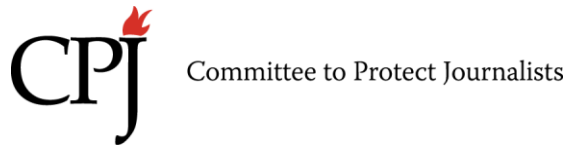
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