



## DEPARTMENT OF THE NAVY

CHIEF OF NAVAL AIR TRAINING  
CNATRA  
250 LEXINGTON BLVD SUITE 102  
CORPUS CHRISTI TX 78419-5041

CNATRAINST 5720.20G  
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01 JUN 09

### CNATRA INSTRUCTION 5720.20G

Subj: PUBLIC AFFAIRS ASPECTS OF ACCIDENTS AND INCIDENTS

Ref: (a) SECNAVINST 5720.44B  
(b) SECNAVINST 4950.4A  
(c) MILPERSMAN 1770

Encl: (1) Sample Typical Preliminary and Follow-up Media Release  
(2) On-site PAO Guidance/Checklist

1. Purpose. To provide standard guidelines and procedures throughout the Naval Air Training Command (NATRACOM) for handling media in the event of aircraft or other mishap. Of particular importance are procedures which need to be in place for those incidents which inevitably occur off-station and after hours.

2. Cancellation. CNATRAINST 5720.20F

3. Background. Recent technological advances now enable civilian news media to broadcast live from remote sites which effectively reduces news turnaround time to that of an instant. Our timely release of news information, more than ever before, is critical. We must be fast, factual, and provide equal treatment to the media. These requirements are fulfilled within the constraints of security, accuracy, propriety, and command policy.

#### 4. Discussion

a. Reference (a) requires that we inform the media of any significant event. The media will present a news story regardless of Navy cooperation. Undue delays in releasing information may cause reporters to speculate or seek out other sources which could result in a distorted or detrimental account of an incident. Good press relations must be cultivated and maintained prior to an emergency.

b. All accidents and incidents are handled within the scope of references (a) through (c). Reference (a) provides guidance for aircraft accidents; reference (b) covers international student military trainee casualty reporting procedures; reference (c) deals with notification of next of kin.

c. The Navy's primary concerns are (1) for the victims, (2) for the Next Of Kin (NOK), (3) to maintain the integrity of the mishap site, and (4) to identify points of contact (POCs) for media reference.

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5. Action

a. In the unfortunate event of a mishap, the significance of which will cause press interest, we must be able to handle news quickly, efficiently, and professionally. Today's technology makes it necessary to establish both a Public Affairs Office (PAO) phone watch and an on-site media coordinator. This will require a concerted, cooperative, and coordinated effort likely involving Training Air Wing (TRAWING)/Naval Air Station (NAS) and squadrons.

b. TRAWING/NAS PAOs are responsible for coordination of media handling for all mishaps within the cognizance of their command unless otherwise directed by higher authority. In the few cases of separate TRAWING and NAS PAO functions, the TRAWING may delegate, in writing, accident and incident handling to the NAS PAO if desired. TRAWING/NAS PAOs should have written mishap Standard Operating Procedures (SOP)s which specify duties of the PAO phone watch and on-site media coordinator.

c. PAO phone watch should contact the Chief of Naval Air Training (CNATRA) PAO as soon as possible following any significant accident or incident. Follow up with a facsimile (FAX) or email of all news releases. Preliminary news release should be sent via FAX or email to the media as soon as basic information is known. Do not wait until you have all the possible details. New information can be handled with a follow-up release. Enclosure (1) provides preliminary and follow-up press release samples.

d. In the event of an on-station mishap, it is easier to control media access and information. Names of Navy personnel injured or killed are withheld until 24 hours after next of kin is notified. This is generally understood and accepted by the media. It is advisable to have an on-site PAO to relay information to PAO phone watch to ensure speed and accuracy of information passed.

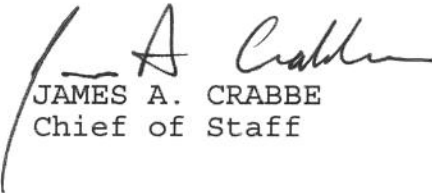
e. In the event of an off-station or "Public Domain" mishap, the media are to be afforded reasonable access to crash sites. There is no authority to forbid taking pictures or confiscating film (except when classified equipment/material is involved - highly unlikely in the case of NATRACOM aircraft). The on-site PAO or official designated Navy representative should be at the mishap site to act as press escort and official spokesperson as well as to relay information back to PAO phone watch. Enclosure (2) is a recommended emergency kit and site rules list for the on-site PAO.

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f. In the event of a remote site accident - one that can't be quickly accessed by car or air - CNATRA PAO will seek the assistance of the PAO closest to the site.

g. In the event of an accident or casualty involving a foreign trainee the cognizant command will refrain from releasing the name to the media until 48 hours after the Secretary of the Navy has been notified and verification that NOK have been notified.

h. In the event of a major and prolonged disaster, PAO responsibility may be assumed by CNATRA, the Commander of Naval Air Forces or the Chief of Information.



JAMES A. CRABBE  
Chief of Staff

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SAMPLE TYPICAL PRELIMINARY PRESS RELEASE

At approximately \_\_\_\_ a.m./p.m. today a (type of aircraft) from (Training Air Wing #) based on board NAS (location), crashed at (sea/near town). A student pilot/instructor pilot was (injured/killed) while conducting routine training. The name(s) of the deceased are being withheld pending a 24 hour period after next of kin notification. An investigation is underway to determine the cause of the mishap.

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NOTE: Additional facts such as "ejected safely" may also be included if applicable. If it is not known which squadron/TRAWING the aircraft was from, the preliminary should just read " a Navy training aircraft..." (The important thing is to get something quick and accurate out to the press.)

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SAMPLE TYPICAL FOLLOW-UP RELEASE

The Navy has identified the aviators whose (type of aircraft) training aircraft crashed during a routine training flight yesterday near (location) as instructor pilot (name, rank, USN/R, age, hometown) and student pilot (same info). They were assigned to Training Squadron (Number) based on board (NAS XXX). An investigation is underway to determine the cause of the mishap.

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ON-SITE PAO GUIDANCE/CHECKLIST

1. Public Affairs on-site POC will report to the scene immediately.
2. Consult with On-Scene Aviation Mishap Board Senior member for news construction.
3. Observe On-Scene Commander's safety corridor; cordon off media with media banner.
4. Identify yourself to the media as POC, brief media on site rules and provide information as it becomes available.
5. Maintain communications with PAO phone watch to ensure they have at least as much information as the media on-site and have notified CNATRA PAO of the accident with any available details.

RECOMMENDED MINIMUM PAO EMERGENCY KIT

- flight gear
- radio or cellular phone/extra batteries
- pencils/paper/masking tape/clipboard
- emergency checklist sheet
- media banner with stakes and rope
- press badge to wear (large enough for 'media' to see)
- flashlight
- rain poncho

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SITE RULES

1. On-Scene Commander is in charge of all operations.
2. Media must stay behind banner.
3. Do not allow media to go anywhere unescorted.
4. Be courteous; don't speculate.
5. Brief media to include that names of injured will be withheld until 24 hours after notification of NOK is verified.
6. Inform the media with new updates; make yourself readily available as their POC so they won't be tempted to ask other non-designated personnel for opinions/speculation.
7. Don't allow the media to use your cellular phone to report to their offices; keep that line open for direct communication with PAO phone watch.

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