

Behavior of journalists in crisis/war situations

Analysis of case studies from Ukraine:

Case V: Voxpot and Central TV/Makariv

Sources:

Video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5seJdhe4Rvc>

Report: https://www.voxpot.cz/zaciname-to-tu-cistit-od-tech-fasistu-tech-hovad-reportaz-z-nestabilni-fronty-mezi-okupanty-a-obrancu-ukrajiny/?fbclid=IwAR0bDsOStQf3MyUzRv7ixH2a70XLJasb0HMeva3LZ3_uWV2iO06NxaVwRMg

Military situation: <https://understandingwar.org/backgrounder/russian-offensive-campaign-assessment-march-3>

Location map: https://militaryland.net/wp-content/uploads/2022/03/day_08_b_Northern-frontline.png

A team of four journalists drove a civilian car to the city of Makariv, which has been in fighting for days. It is not known whether the vehicle was marked "PRESS". Makariv is located on the main axis of attack of RUS forces for the encirclement of Kiev on the western side. It is the center of gravity of the RUS attack and therefore also of the UKR defense. The team approached the city of Makariv from the south and was already warned at the bridge over the Zdvyzh (3 km to the front) by people at a checkpoint about the dangers of continuing the journey. On the northern edge of the city, the team passed a UKR position. Arrangements were made with the soldiers about the destination of the drive: Borodyanka, is 20 km away, clearly in the territory captured by RUS troops. The soldier replies with "Good luck."

Outside the city, the team drove up to an RUS position and was immediately fired upon with rifles from about 100 meters away. They took evasive action by driving backwards. After about 400 meters, the shelling ended as a UKR armored personnel carrier drove into the line of fire and provided cover for the civilian vehicle to safely continue evading. As the vehicle continued, more close-range gunfire could be heard (50-100 meters) coming from the defending UKR forces. According to the journalists, the vehicle was hit by a shot in the driver's side. There were no casualties.

Assessment

The team drove directly from a UKR position head-on into the positions of the RUS main attack forces during a cease-fire and was engaged by their security. The objective of the RUS forces was apparently not to destroy the vehicle, but to send it back. Distance and available weapons would have allowed destruction of the vehicle. While evading, UKR forces provided fire support and the engagement resumed. The backup by UKR forces could only have occurred because the team had previously checked out with the defenders and was thus known. Had they not done so, or had the time gap been too great, the team could have been

caught between the fronts here. No statement can be made here about the application or effect of press markings.

Conclusion

Whenever a journalist moves in a war zone, he or she must know the positions and directions of attack of the forces involved. This can be done through research or by means of arrangements on the ground. Under no circumstances should one move directly toward a position without prior consultation. This team is very lucky to be alive.

But what must also be made clear is that the team lost its "neutral/objective" role. On the one hand, because it was approaching a RUS position from a UKR position and is thus basically considered hostile, and on the other hand, because a firefight between RUS and UKR forces probably broke out due to the behavior of this team.

Take Home Message

1. at each checkpoint you pass, you should have a short chat to know what is beyond and to be remembered for the way back.
2. anyone traveling in a war zone needs to know the tactical situation (understandingwar.org, militaryland.net)
3. never drive between the fronts. NEVER!!!

General:

Reliable sources on the tactical situation in Ukraine:

Understandingwar.org (English, daily update, *text-heavy, very precise, *inaccurate map)

Militaryland.net (English, daily update, rough overview in text, *very accurate maps of each region*)

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