



## Notify the Media When the Chief Visits Your Post

The commander-in-chief's visit to your area is an important event for several reasons. First, they are the chief spokesman for our organization. Second, they meet with the President and key congressional members to express the interests and needs of the nation's veterans. Third, they are widely traveled and aware of the concerns of veterans and their families across the nation.

For these reasons, the local media will be interested in his views on veterans' issues, national security and foreign affairs. It benefits the VFW and veterans in general if the Chief's visit is well-covered by the media. Media plans for the Chief's visit should include some of the following guidelines:

- **Issue a News Release.**

First, contact your Department headquarters to see if it is writing the news release for the Chief's visit. If it is, ask the Department for a copy. Then make enough copies of it to hand out to the news editors in your community. If the Department is not creating a news release, write one yourself.

- **Talk Shows.** If any of the TV and radio stations in your community air talk shows, contact them and ask if they would like to have the VFW's commander-in-chief as a guest. You should do this even before you get the news release because these shows schedule their guests far in advance. Of course, be sure the Chief will be in your area long enough to take part in this type of interview. Most Post visits are scheduled for 30 minutes. Such an interview works best at the beginning of a visit or at the end. In any case, coordinate with your Department headquarters to determine what works best with the Chief's already-established schedule.

- **News Conference.** Since the amount of time a Chief can spend at a Post is limited, it is usually a good idea to invite the media for a specific time. Then, turn the Chief over to them for a news conference-type interview.

- **Place.** Where you conduct the interview is very important. **Do not conduct interviews in the Post canteen.** Use your meeting room or some area that is clean and quiet.

- **Interviewees.** The media is there to interview the Chief. Conduct the interview in such a manner so others cannot interrupt. You, the Chief, the Post/District commander and the Department commander are the only VFW members who should attend the interview. Post, District and Department commanders are there only to provide information on veterans' issues on a local or state level. Do not put the Chief into an interview by his/herself where the media are going to concentrate on local veterans' issues. The Chief talks only on relevant national and international issues.

- **Time.** The best time to conduct an interview at the Post is as soon as the Chief arrives. Reporters have deadlines to meet, and they do not have time to stand around while the Chief visits with members. Get the interview started when they arrive. They can visit with members later. The only exception to this rule is when the Chief will be at the Post for a luncheon or dinner. For these visits, ask the media if they would like to eat with members, listen to the Chief's remarks afterward, and then interview them. Quite often, the Chief's remarks to the group after the meal give the media ideas for questions.

- **Follow-up.** If there are questions that can't be answered during the interview, be sure to get the name and phone number of the reporter, and provide an answer as soon as possible.

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