

# ★ OPERATION ★ HOLLYWOOD



**HOW THE PENTAGON SHAPES  
AND CENSORS THE MOVIES**

**DAVID L. ROBB**

# OPERATION HOLLYWOOD



The only thing Hollywood likes more than a good movie is a good deal. For more than fifty years producers and directors of war and action movies have been getting a *great* deal from America's armed forces by receiving access to billions of dollars worth of military equipment and personnel for little or no cost. Although this arrangement considerably lowers a film's budget, the cost in terms of intellectual freedom can be steep. In exchange for access to sophisticated military hardware and expertise, filmmakers must agree to censorship from the Pentagon.

As veteran Hollywood journalist David L. Robb shows in this revealing insider's look into Hollywood's "dirtiest little secret," the final product that moviegoers see at the theater reflects less about what the director intends and more what the powers-that-be in the military want to project about America's armed forces. Sometimes a military liaison officer demands removal of just a few words; other times whole scenes must be scrapped or completely revised. What happens if a director refuses the requested changes? Robb quotes a Pentagon spokesperson: "Well, I'm taking my toys and I'm going home. I'm taking my tanks and my troops and my location, and I'm going home." Such threats can be persuasive to filmmakers trying to keep their productions on time and within budget.

Robb takes us behind the scenes during the making of many well-known movies and television series. From *The Right Stuff* to *Top*

*(continued on back flap)*



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DAVID L. ROBB



Prometheus Books

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This book is dedicated to my mom,  
Gladys Mailloux,  
1927–2002,  
and to Eileen Kelly,  
the love of my life



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## FOREWORD

The book that you are about to read is ostensibly about the long-standing relationship between the United States military and Hollywood—a symbiotic relationship in which each receives benefits from the others' work. Hollywood has long relied on military cooperation in the making of its movies, ranging from access to film archives to the use of actual warships and equipment. For the military, the benefit is the ability to help shape its own image in the most influential vehicle of popular culture: the movies. On one level, such work seems like little more than a rational use of resources by the military. However, in this important new book, David Robb meticulously documents something far more profound and chilling: America's long-standing propaganda machine. In remarkable detail, Robb describes how the Pentagon has worked to change not just the portrayal of the military but the portrayal of history for Americans. The result is the manipulation of the public's view of its government—often substituting revisionist accounts for historical fact.

In the past, I have criticized the work of the Pentagon's "liaison" offices in rewriting movie and television scripts. However, no one has ever documented the entire history and scope of this work, which the military struggles to keep out of public view. *Operation Hollywood* brings this work into the full light of day, offering an unprecedented insight into the dark world of the military's shaping of public opinion and popular culture. Robb reveals the internal workings and deliberations of a handful

of military officials in the rewriting of scripts or alteration of images for public consumption. The result is a fascinating mosaic of a bureaucracy turned loose on American culture.

Like other propaganda systems around the world, the efforts of the military are often quixotic and comical in resisting well-known historical facts. Yet, in comparison with other countries, the U.S. military operates perhaps the most sophisticated and successful propaganda system in the world. These liaison offices work to influence public opinion on the margins and to reward scriptwriters and directors who yield to their demands on the content of scripts. The effect is more significant than most Americans would think. Robb's work reveals that some of the most significant films and scenes of modern films were shaped not by considerations of art or history but by coercion.

The success of the liaison offices is due in part to their modest objectives. Unlike crude regimes, like North Korea, which try to control all information in a society, the U.S. military cannot (and culturally would not) attempt such authoritarian objectives. The military censors described in this book recoil at any suggestion that they are engaging in either propaganda or censorship. Such work is rightfully viewed as un-American. Instead, these officials view their heavy-handed editing and threats in purely business terms—supplying things of value in the form of military resources in exchange for benefits in kind.

Shaping public opinion is not some idle pastime for the U.S. military. Funding and recruitment depend on favorable public impressions—impressions often shaped in subtle, indirect exposures to films. The military's decline after the Vietnam War galvanized its commitment to stay active and vigilant in presenting (or procuring) positive images of its work. Most recently, this image was threatened by the war in Iraq. The military was faced with the daily coverage of losses in Iraq, coupled with pictures of increasingly hostile Iraqis celebrating the killing of American soldiers. Opposition at home to the occupation was hardening by the day and the military needed to respond to the increasingly ugly reality of occupation. The solution was simple: change reality.

In what has been described as a "Pentagon infomercial," the Defense Department has hired a former producer of the TV show *Cops* to film postwar Iraq from its perspective. Though producer Bertram van Munster has denied that he is shooting a propaganda piece, it is clear that the Pen-

tagon is gearing up to frame its own account—and history—of the Iraq war.

Propaganda has a long history in the United States despite our legal and cultural opposition to the practice. Paul Revere can be credited with one of the earliest propaganda efforts when he produced an engraving of the Boston Massacre of 1770. Revere's famous engraving depicted a highly inaccurate picture of the massacre, suggesting that the British troops fired in an unprovoked and unjustified manner. In reality, the troops were surrounded by a violent mob (not facing peaceful protesters with an avenue of escape). Nevertheless, it was Revere's account that would dominate the public understanding of the incident, filling the ranks of revolutionary organizations and garnering sympathy and support abroad for the colonial cause.

Propaganda efforts have continued on a sporadic basis since the Revolution. For example, during the Reagan administration, the government had an office that was widely denounced as a propaganda center. While director of the Office of Public Diplomacy at the State Department, Otto Reich oversaw a controversial propaganda campaign in support of the contras that engaged in violations of federal law. One of his former aides, Pat Buchanan, described the office as dispensing "White Propaganda."\* Reich reportedly attempted to punish or remove journalists who reported on the abuses of the contras and leaked false stories to influence Congress. The U.S. comptroller general issued a formal report in 1987 that concluded that Reich oversaw extensive "prohibited, covert propaganda activities."

While such efforts have generally proven unsuccessful, government officials never seem to tire of the effort. The administration has long taken the view that criticism of policies simply calls for better marketing rather than changing the product itself. For example, when the administration faced an uproar in the Middle East over its policies and military campaigns, it hired an ad executive, Charlotte Beers, to market its policies to the Arab street. Named the undersecretary of state for public diplomacy, Beers had previously marketed such products as Head & Shoulders and Uncle Ben's Rice. The administration apparently believed that a similar campaign could convince 1.3 billion Muslims that America's foreign

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\*Propaganda disseminated and acknowledged by the sponsor or its accredited agency.



policy had “fewer flakes” or was “less sticky.” It was an utter failure and Beers resigned, citing health reasons.

In comparison, the work of the Pentagon is far more sophisticated and successful. While liaison officials hate the term *propaganda*, they are in fact engaged in such an effort when they use threats or rewards to shape films to advance a particular sanitized view. The term itself is derived from the Latin term *propaganda fide*, or “to spread the faith.” For the military, the image of its personnel is essential to preserving its own articles of faith: discipline, honor, and loyalty.

In “spreading the faith,” facts rarely appear to be a barrier to a good story—from the military’s perspective. For example, military and intelligence sources framed an account of Pfc. Jessica Lynch that was almost entirely manufactured for public appeal. With a headline proclaiming that Lynch was “fighting to the death,” the *Washington Post* cited military sources to give a breathless account of how the supply clerk fought Rambo-style in close combat until she was wounded and captured. The tale of her rescue was equally breathless and equally false—based on an edited Pentagon video showing Special Forces giving the appearance they were under fire as they whisked the heroine away.

It now appears that Lynch did not engage the enemy at all; she was not shot and stabbed; and there was no hostile fire (or any hostile forces) at the hospital. Lynch proved far more frank and honest in her own account. Lynch has stated that she never fired a shot, remained huddled in a protective ball praying in the Humvee during the battle, and objected to being used for military public relations. Stating that the rescue “did not happen” like the military said, Lynch objected that “[the military] used me as a way to symbolize all this stuff. . . . [I]t hurt in a way that people would make up stories that they had no truth about.” After Lynch came forward with the true account, the film *Saving Private Lynch* was rewritten and, after a chorus of criticism, the military dropped the use of its sensational rescue film.

Of course, none of this has anything to do with either truth or the integrity of our soldiers. As coverage of the Iraq war attests, they need no help with their image. Every picture of GIs risking their lives to save wounded civilians or enemy soldiers speaks volumes about their character. It is powerful because it is true, it is unrehearsed, and it is no one’s message but their own.

Most Americans are unaware that the U.S. military routinely reviews scripts and that the Pentagon compels changes to convey the government's message. Although rarely publicly acknowledged, major films have been rewritten to remove negative, though historically accurate, facts to present a more positive military image. This work is done by a team of military reviewers "embedded" in Hollywood. Most recently, the military quietly worked on a script for the television program *JAG* to present its controversial military tribunals as something of an ACLU lawyer's dream.

This work thrives in the shadow of the First Amendment. Though the Constitution generally bars the government from preventing or punishing free speech, it is less clear about the degree to which the government may assist speech that it favors. To that end, the military uses access to military units, bases, and even stock military footage and open areas such as the Presidio to force prepublication review and script changes. This access is vital for many films on military subjects, so producers often yield to the demands.

The military has insisted that it is not engaged in either propaganda or censorship. Adopting the narrowest sense of these terms, they may be able to avoid such pejorative labels. Propaganda denotes a certain product; a packaged news account or film developed by a government or an organization to shape opinion. Censorship denotes a type of action on the products of others; the tailoring of publications or broadcasts to meet the criteria of a government or organization.

However, the most common definition of propaganda is "the systematic propagation of . . . information reflecting the views and interests of its propagators." That certainly seems to fit the military liaison offices to a tee. Liaison officers insist that they do not produce propaganda because they do not try to change reality or remove historically accurate accounts. Robb's book proves the falsity of this claim with numerous accounts to the contrary. Yet, this is not traditional propaganda since the military does not generate the product itself and does not compel others to produce it. Rather, it achieves the same result through indirect influence; securing tailored historical accounts by withholding important resources.

Likewise, this work can be distinguished from the classic definition of censorship. Outside of very limited wartime circumstances, the government is prohibited from engaging in censorship of the media or other

publications. Moreover, the military is not prohibiting the publication of adverse images or facts. It is only making such publication more expensive and difficult in comparison to those of more compliant filmmakers. The difference can be quite subtle since even major directors like John Woo have knuckled under to pressure from the military to remove historically accurate scenes from their films.

While one can debate the technical meaning of censorship, there is little question that the military liaison offices produce the same effect of censorship. These offices routinely punish producers who do not yield to their demands by denying them basic assistance while affording such assistance to their competitors. In one case, a filmmaker was denied access to the Presidio grounds in San Francisco unless he yielded to military demands—despite the fact that the public has free access to these areas. Congress has never given these offices such authority or approved the use of public funds and resources to shape public opinion. The military equipment, films, and property withheld by the military do not belong to the military. They belong to the American people. Yet, the military routinely withholds public resources to secure its own benefits. In this sense, the military is engaged in a type of unlawful conversion in which the military withholds public property until a producer yields to its demands.

Those demands can be quite sweeping. Phil Strub, the head of the Pentagon's liaison office, recently revealed the following criterion for getting approval for a film as "accurate": "Any film that portrays the military as negative is not realistic to us."

Strub has used his authority to shape history to his satisfaction. For example, Robb details how Strub insisted on changes to the film *Thirteen Days*—a historical account of the Cuban Missile Crisis. In the film, the Joint Chiefs of Staff are shown favoring an attack on Cuba. This was indeed the position of the military brass—which proved wrong and could have triggered a war with Russia. Strub insisted that the historically accurate account be rewritten to portray the generals in a less hawkish light—particularly the portrayal of Air Force Gen. Curtis LeMay as "unintelligent and bellicose." Of course, LeMay was widely viewed as unintelligent and bellicose. Indeed, his hawkish views were so extreme that he was viewed as a virtual caricature of a military throwback.

Strub, however, did not stop in his insistence in rehabilitating charac-

ters like LeMay. His office also insisted on the deletion of a scene involving the shooting down of a U2 reconnaissance pilot, who was killed over Cuba. The Pentagon told the producers that such an incident never occurred and insisted that it not be part of the film. However, public records establish that Maj. Rudolf Anderson was indeed shot down by a surface-to-air missile on October 27, 1962. The liaison office steadfastly refused to acknowledge the incident, even after presented with proof of an Air Force Cross awarded posthumously for the mission and a letter from Pres. John F. Kennedy to the widow.

In the end, Strub punished the producers for refusing to yield to his demands: they were forced to spend a great deal of money in the Philippines to reconstruct vital set equipment.

*Apocalypse Now* was viewed as “not realistic” because of negative scenes about Vietnam (and its makers were denied any assistance or access), while the producers of the recent film *Windtalkers* yielded to Pentagon demands for script changes. The film is based on the work of the famous Navajo “code talkers” who used their unwritten native language as an unbreakable code in World War II. The film was written from the historical accounts of the code talkers and other witnesses. However, many of these historical accounts showed the military in less than a flattering light.

For example, the original script featured a Marine called “the Dentist” who methodically removed the gold in the mouths of dead Japanese, a practice known to have occurred during World War II. The head of the Marine liaison office, Capt. Matt Morgan, insisted that the scene “has to go” because it featured conduct that was “un-Marine, and more representative of a conscript force.” Thus, while not denying that the army (a “conscript force”) might be depicted in this manner, it would not do for a depiction of the Marines.

Instead, Morgan turned screenwriter and insisted that “the Dentist” be shown gathering military souvenirs, because it is “less brutal.” There is no question that such conduct did occur (indeed Morgan acknowledged to Robb that such crimes were committed by Marines in the war), but it was image, not accuracy, that dictated the removal. Unlike the producers and directors who refused such ultimatums in films like *Thirteen Days*, director John Woo yielded to the pressure and eliminated the scene over the objections of screenwriters.

Strub further insisted on other changes to obscure historical fact. For example, he insisted that a scene of actor Nicolas Cage killing a surrendering Japanese soldier be eliminated despite the documented proof of such acts. Again, Woo yielded to appease the military. An even more shocking demand was directed at the entire thrust of the movie. It has been widely reported that the military had ordered that Marines kill any Navajo who was at risk of capture in order to prevent the Japanese from learning the language and destroying the value of Navajo as a natural code system. Not only were these orders confirmed by the Navajos and other American soldiers, but the U.S. Congress confirmed that such orders had been given. Yet, it was Strub, not Congress, who could withhold support. So, again, Woo relented and changed the scene to make it seem that such orders were at best implied when they were, in fact, express.

Robb's detailing of such encounters is extraordinary. His ability to get central figures to speak freely on these subjects is itself a remarkable feat. Robb does not condemn individuals like Morgan, but rather reveals the mindset that leads to such aggressive tailoring of historical films.

Robb shows how idiosyncratic the work of military censors can be. For example, he recounts how Navy Secretary James Webb barred cooperation with the filming of *My Father, My Son*, a moving true account of Navy Adm. Elmo Zumwalt and his son Elmo Zumwalt III. The book details how the admiral ordered the spraying of Agent Orange over an area where his son was serving. The latter would ultimately die of cancer after finishing the book with his father. Webb insisted that there would be no support due to the alleged connection between Agent Orange and cancer, a connection documented by Congress. Ironically, after Webb's unconscionable decision, he left the navy and became an author himself. His project, *Fields of Fire*, was also rejected by the navy, this time by critics of Webb in an endless cycle of personal animus and bureaucratic whim.

This subtle use of influence produces an extremely effective form of propaganda. Until Robb's book, these deals were known to only a few people. When a director like Woo caves in to pressure, both he and the military liaisons have every incentive to keep the deal secret. Viewers are never informed that the movies were subject to military revision or censorship. This is essential in the propaganda business. The degree to which a message is absorbed by a viewer depends in large part on his or her ini-

tial resistance or skepticism. By ensuring the propaganda value of films that are ostensibly the work of independent producers, the role of military censors is hidden from the viewer. Most Americans have no idea who Phil Strub is. Very few would give this bureaucrat the authority to tailor the films and programs that they watch. Yet, Strub routinely insists that filmmakers adhere to his view of America and its armed forces. Strub's predecessor made his own demands on America's filmmakers because of a personal dislike for foul language. Known as a formal and proper gentleman, Don Baruch demanded films show soldiers in a light more reflective of the eighteenth-century fields of Eton than the battlefields of Vietnam.

Robb's book should outrage most Americans and lead to hearings in Congress. Congress has never given the military the authority to use public funds and resources to engage in its own self-serving efforts to shape its public image. In the very least, it is a misuse of public funds. At worst, it is a new variation on censorship, crafted to operate in the shadow of the First Amendment.

What is clear is that the system will not end without a public outcry. The military previously moved to eliminate the funding of Strub's office. He was saved by lobbying from the movie industry, particularly Motion Picture Association of America chief Jack Valenti, who insisted that he continue his work. In 1998, Strub was close to losing his job and appears to have enlisted the support of the very studios that depend on his largesse. Valenti personally intervened with Defense Secretary William Cohen and succeeded in reversing the decision. For people like Valenti, the issue is not censorship or propaganda, it is the bottom line. Valenti has long been accused of supporting the major studios against the smaller independent outfits. The major studios tend to produce the type of portrayals of the military that Strub prefers: uncritical and intensely patriotic. Nevertheless, the effort of film executives like Valenti to preserve a system of prepublication review is shocking and anathema to the arts.

David Robb's book reveals a subterranean world of military censors, Hollywood studios, and filmmakers who negotiate the images that we see on our big and small screens. In many respects, the book has an intimate feel for the reader who can easily recall many of these scenes and stories. What is disconcerting is to learn that these films were not simply the product of art and history but of a process of manipulation and negotia-



tion. The ultimate subject of these negotiations was not the movie but us. The question is what we would be allowed to see and how particular images might influence our view of the military.

By simply making the public aware of this concealed world, Robb has robbed the military of one of its most important elements in shaping public opinion: stealth. Most Americans resent being manipulated or watching scenes sanitized for their consumption. The question, however, remains as to the future of America's propaganda machine. Run by professionals skilled in shaping opinion, the liaison offices have proven adept at self-preservation. Yet, they have never had to deal with a comprehensive documentation of their work like *Operation Hollywood*. It will now rest with the public and Congress to decide whether this work will again recede into the shadows of public opinion or whether America will leave the business of propaganda to other less enlightened nations.

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# INTRODUCTION

**W**e may think that the content of American movies is free from government interference, but in fact, the Pentagon has been telling filmmakers what to say—and what not to say—for decades. It's Hollywood's dirtiest little secret.

Film and TV producers have allowed this to happen because collaborating with the Pentagon can save them a lot of money. Millions of dollars can be shaved off a film's budget if the military agrees to lend its equipment and assistance. And all a producer has to do to get that assistance is submit five copies of the script to the Pentagon for approval; make whatever script changes the Pentagon suggests; film the script exactly as approved by the Pentagon; and prescreen the finished product for Pentagon officials before it's shown to the public.

It's a devil's bargain that's a good deal for both sides. And the only thing Hollywood likes more than a good movie is a good deal.

"They make prostitutes of us all because they want us to sell out to their point of view," says filmmaker Oliver Stone, who was refused military assistance for his Vietnam War-era films *Platoon* and *Born on the Fourth of July*.

"They want a certain kind of movie made," Stone says. "They don't want to deal with the downside of war. They assist movies that don't tell the truth about combat, and they don't assist movies that seek to tell the truth about combat. Most films about the military are recruiting posters."

This collaboration works because the Pentagon has what Hollywood wants—access to billions of dollars worth of sophisticated military hardware to put into movies; and Hollywood has what the Pentagon wants—access to the eyeballs of millions of viewers and potential recruits. And the Pentagon is quite candid about why it provides this assistance to Hollywood. According to the army's own handbook, *A Producer's Guide to U.S. Army Cooperation with the Entertainment Industry*, this collaboration must "aid in the recruiting and retention of personnel."

Over the last fifty years, hundreds of films have gone through the military's approval process, leaving the Pentagon's cutting-room floor a graveyard of deleted dialogue, eliminated characters, and cut scenes. Entire movies have even been scrapped because someone in the military didn't want them made.

The Pentagon even uses movies and TV shows to target children as future recruits, as it did with two of the most popular kids' TV shows of all time, *Lassie* and *The Mickey Mouse Club*. Episodes of both shows were rewritten at the Pentagon's insistence to make the armed forces more attractive to children.

The Supreme Court has long held that the Constitution does not allow the government to bestow benefits on those whose speech it approves of, while refusing to grant the same benefits to those whose speech it disapproves of. In a 1995 case, *Rosenberger v. The University of Virginia*, the Court ruled quite clearly: "In the realm of private speech or expression, government regulation may not favor one speaker over another."

And yet, the Pentagon, which has been doing just that for more than fifty years, has never been challenged in the courts, even though top First Amendment experts are now saying that the practice is blatantly unconstitutional.

And Congress, which has oversight responsibility, has never once looked into whether the placement of propaganda by the world's most powerful military into the world's most powerful medium is in the public's interest.

Indeed, Congress itself is one of the targets of the military's campaign to influence public opinion through the insertion of military propaganda into films and TV shows.

Maj. David Georgi, who was an army technical advisor on dozens of

films and television shows, now acknowledges that Congress was on the Pentagon's target list.

"We want to show the Congress what we can do," he says of the Pentagon's motives in placing positive images of the military in movies. "Obviously, a movie is not always 100 percent factual, so when we get Congress to watch it, they see it in a favorable light, and down the road, this will help with funding."

In the following pages you will see how Hollywood has been complicit in the military's relentless campaign to covertly manipulate our opinions about world politics, American history, the nature of war, and above all, the image of the American military establishment itself.

## Note About the Sources

The reader will find a list of all persons interviewed for *Operation Hollywood* at the end of the book. Because of concern for their jobs, some individuals have requested anonymity.





# ★ CHAPTER 1 ★

## CENSORING JAMES BOND

**I**t was just one little line of dialogue—one little joke—that the Pentagon wanted to delete. So what's the big deal? It's only a movie. But the screenwriter was upset. He wanted to keep the line in the script.

Bruce Feirstein had written the first draft of the screenplay for the new James Bond film *Tomorrow Never Dies* in his apartment in Santa Monica, California, and now, in the spring of 1997, he was working on the final draft at the film company's production offices in London. This was his second Bond film—he'd already written *Goldeneye*, which had come out two years earlier, and would go on to pen a third, *The World Is Not Enough*, two years later.

The navy was willing to let the producers of *Tomorrow Never Dies* use some of its ships and helicopter, but Phil Strub, the head of the Pentagon's film liaison office, wanted something in return—he wanted the offending line of dialogue removed. So the producers came to Feirstein to plead the Pentagon's case.

The line could embarrass the new American ambassador to Vietnam, they told him. The line could damage the newly reestablished relations between America and Vietnam, they said. It could spark an international crisis, they said.

"Yeah, but it's a good line," Feirstein told the producers. "I really wish we could use it. Are you sure?" Yeah, the producers said. Phil Strub at the Pentagon wanted it out.

The offending line of dialogue poked fun at America's only military defeat, but Strub and the Pentagon don't have much of a sense of humor about the Vietnam War. In the original draft of his script, Feirstein had James Bond, to be played for the first time by Pierce Brosnan, getting ready to parachute into the waters off Vietnam. A rogue CIA agent, to be played by Joe Don Baker, warns Bond to be careful not to be captured.

"You know what will happen," the agent tells Bond. "It will be war, and maybe this time we'll win."

That's the line that had to go, but Feirstein didn't understand at first. What's the big deal? It's just a little joke, he told them. But the producers told him it was a big deal—to the Pentagon. The producers told him that Strub was worried that the line could be misinterpreted by the Vietnamese—that perhaps they would see it as a veiled threat by the U.S. military, which, after all, was cooperating with the film's production. And this, in turn, could embarrass the new U.S. ambassador to Vietnam, Pete Peterson, a former POW who only two weeks earlier had arrived in Hanoi to become the first American ambassador to Vietnam in decades.

Feirstein finally relented after it was clear that the producers were not going to let him keep the line in the movie. "Did the film rise or fall on this line?" he asks. "No. It was just a joke. So why not take it out?"

In the end, Strub was happy, the producers were happy, and the U.S. ambassador to Vietnam was happy. But the American moviegoing audience never knew that *Tomorrow Never Dies* had been edited by the Pentagon for political reasons.

And this wasn't the first time that the producers of a James Bond film had come to Feirstein to ask him to change a Bond script for political reasons. In November of 1994, while he was working on the final draft of *Goldeneye* at the film's production offices in Leavesden Studios north of London, the producers asked him to change the nationality of one of the villains.

Feirstein had been brought onto the project late in the game to rewrite another writer's script. Strub had a problem with the first version, which portrayed an American admiral as a dupe who unwittingly allows a seductive member of the Russian mafia to steal his identification badge, which then allows her to steal a top secret space weapon dubbed "Goldeneye."

The producers wanted the Pentagon to provide three helicopters and fifty Marines for two or three days of shooting in Puerto Rico for the climactic scene in which the Marines come to Bond's rescue, albeit rather

belatedly. Strub told the producers that the Pentagon would be happy to help out. Any movie that has Marines coming to the rescue is a good movie, as far as the Pentagon is concerned. But there was just one little problem. If the producers wanted the Pentagon's assistance, they would have to change the nationality of the American admiral who is duped by the villain.

The producers could have said no. They could have rented helicopters and hired extras to portray the Marines. But that would have cost more money. They would have to paint the helicopters and hire the pilots and rent the uniforms and rehearse the extras. Using real Marines and real military helicopters was much easier and much cheaper. So they agreed to accept Strub's terms, changing the nationality of the admiral in exchange for access to the military's equipment and manpower. They were, in effect, taking a bribe to change their film.

After the deal was done, Strub wrote a thank-you letter to Tom Pevsner, executive producer of *Goldeneye*.

"We appreciate your changing the identity of the U.S. admiral to a foreign officer," Strub said in the letter, dated January 20, 1995.

In an interview at his office in the Pentagon, Strub says: "We couldn't have a film in which a [U.S.] navy admiral reveals secrets. So we said, 'Make him another navy.' They made him a French admiral, and the navy cooperated."

But changing the identity of the admiral to a French officer created a new problem. The producers, it turned out, also needed the cooperation of the French navy to make the film and the French didn't want one of their admirals being portrayed as a dupe either.

"I got a note from one of the line producers that we had to make certain changes to accommodate the French government," Feirstein recalls. "The female villain needed to steal an admiral's identification card to get on a frigate to steal a helicopter. The frigate was in Monte Carlo. By the time I got on, there was no American admiral. I came on the last draft, and we were not sure who was going to lend us the boat. And when the French lent us the boat, they wanted to make sure that the French military was in no way made to look bad. When they lend you the toys, they want some say in how the toys are used."

So the admiral, whose nationality had started out as an American, only to be changed to French, is now a Canadian.

And in the film itself, if you look closely, you can see that the

admiral's identification card now has a Canadian maple leaf on it. Which was just fine with the Pentagon and the French admiralty, and just fine with the producers, too, because they didn't need anything from the Canadian navy.



PUBLIC AFFAIRS

ASSISTANT TO THE SECRETARY OF DEFENSE  
1400 DEFENSE PENTAGON  
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20301-1400



January 20, 1995

Mr. Tom Fevner  
Executive Producer, "GoldenEye"  
Eon Productions, LTD  
Leavesden Airfield, Hill Farm Avenue  
Herts WD2 7RR  
United Kingdom

Dear Mr. Fevner:

The Department of Defense is pleased to approve U.S. military assistance in the production of the feature motion picture "GoldenEye." The assistance consists largely of providing fifty Marines and three National Guard UH-1N helicopters for one to two days of filming in Puerto Rico. The scene, to be filmed in early February of this year, depicts the Marines coming to James Bond's rescue, albeit rather belatedly.

We appreciate your changing the identity of the U.S. admiral to a foreign officer, and your including dialogue recognition identifying the Marines. The Department of Defense Project Officer is First Lieutenant Dustin Salem, Deputy Director, Marine Corps Public Affairs Office, Los Angeles, with whom you are already acquainted. Lieutenant Salem will assist you in completing the legal requirements of our association, principally the production assistance agreement.

We wish you success in production and look forward to screening the production upon its release to the general public. If I can be of further assistance, please don't hesitate to let me know.

Sincerely,

*Philip M. Strub*  
Philip M. Strub  
Special Assistant for Audiovisual

CC:  
HQMC-PA  
NGB-PA

Phil Strub's letter to the executive producer of *Goldeneye*, January 20, 1995.

# ★ CHAPTER 2 ★

## “A COMMERCIAL FOR US”

The cantina was crowded. Waiters dashed from table to table, balancing spicy dishes and exotic drinks on wooden trays. Ivy covered the walls and flowers adorned the tables. The restaurant was beautiful, but the smell of horse shit was overwhelming.

Producer Mace Neufeld and director Phillip Noyce sat at a large table with their location manager, Stuart Neumann, taking in the local color and flavor of Medellin, Colombia—the cocaine capital of the world and the setting for their next movie, *Clear and Present Danger*. Based on the Tom Clancy novel, the film would star Harrison Ford as CIA agent Jack Ryan, who battles drug kingpins in Colombia—and dangerous men in his own government.

Fabio Ochoa, the cantina’s owner, sat in an oversized chair across the room. Men, women, and children approached his table to shake his fat hand. Ochoa—all 360 pounds of him—had been one of the top drug lords in Colombia until the local authorities made him an offer he couldn’t refuse: Get out of the dope business and they would let him live. So he got out of the drug business—at least temporarily—and built a restaurant, and to make it a little different, he constructed a corral right in the middle of the dining room. So now, on this warm afternoon in 1993, he spends the day holding court and watching his grandchildren as they ride his elegant Paso Fino horses around the restaurant to the delight of his customers. It was just the kind of local color the producer had been looking for.

The filmmakers had flown into Medellín from Bogotá the night before. Their studio bosses back at Paramount Pictures were worried for their safety, and with good reason. Murders and kidnappings were common in this part of the world. And airplanes were crashing—or being bombed out of the sky—on a regular basis. Just before their plane took off from Bogotá, somebody came onboard, knocked on the cabin door, and handed the pilot a revolver. And just a few weeks earlier, cartel bandits had blown up several radar beacons along their route—instruments that were needed to navigate over the vast mountain range that separates the two cities.

But a State Department employee stationed in Medellín had been looking out for them. He showed them the sights, and steered them clear of the worst neighborhoods, and before long they were back home in Hollywood with some good stories to tell and a real sense of intrigue and danger that would permeate their movie.

But dealing with the Pentagon would prove even more difficult.

Right up until the day shooting was to start, Neufeld didn't know if he was going to get the Pentagon's approval for his movie. Phil Strub, the Pentagon's chief liaison to the film industry, was playing hardball. He wanted major changes in the script before he would give Neufeld what he wanted, which was the use of several F-14 jet fighters, three state-of-the-art Black Hawk attack helicopters, and access to Arlington National Cemetery.

In a July 20, 1993, letter to Neufeld, Strub said that the Pentagon wouldn't be providing assistance to the production because of its "very negative portrayals of the U.S. President and his national security advisor; U.S. military combat forces conducting illegal, covert operations in Colombia; very negative portrayal of Colombia."

Neufeld had read the Pentagon's guidelines for assisting film productions. They required filmmakers to accurately portray the military, but they didn't say anything about making the government of Colombia look good—or even the president of the United States, for that matter.

Neufeld was in a jam. Jet fighters would be hard to find, but he could get the special effects department to whip up something resembling an F-14 in flight; and he could rent Huey helicopters, put some machine guns in the doors, and paint them to look like army choppers. And he got

the prop department busy at work in case they had to turn a park into Arlington National Cemetery.

“We had some fake tombstones standing by,” location manager Neumann recalls. “A couple hundred.”

But it would be a lot more expensive to do all this, so Neufeld was still pressing the Pentagon for assistance. But it wasn’t going to be easy, and large parts of the script would have to be changed to satisfy Strub. Neufeld was reluctant to cave in at first, and battled Strub for weeks to keep the script intact. But in the end, Neufeld realized that unless he gave the Pentagon what it wanted, he wouldn’t get what he wanted.

“Perhaps the biggest hurdle the [Department of Defense’s] public affairs officers had to overcome was the filmmakers’ sense of our meddling in their product and our sense that they weren’t taking us seriously,” said Army Maj. David Georgi, the technical advisor that the army assigned to the film, in an internal memo dated July 26, 1994—a few days after shooting was completed.

“There was a tension, almost until the day filming began, which manifested itself in our comments which went unanswered in subsequent drafts of the script,” Georgi wrote. “When the filmmakers realized that unless the services were satisfied with the script, approval would not be granted, the changes were finally made.”

One of the script changes that the Pentagon insisted on was a line spoken by the president of the United States at the end of the movie. Frustrated by the violence and lawlessness of the drug cartels, the president says, only half-jokingly, in a November 10, 1992, draft of the script, that he wishes he could blow up most of South America.

“Those sons-of-bitches,” the president says, referring to the Colombian drug lords. “I swear, sometimes I’d like to level that whole damn country—and Peru and Ecuador while we’re at it.”

Strub, however, was not going to allow anything like that in a movie that the Pentagon was supporting.

“At the end of the script, the President of the United States swears that, sometimes, he’d like to level Colombia, Ecuador and Peru,” wrote Air Force Col. Edward B. Ellis, chief of the Joint Chiefs of Staff’s Strategic Plans and Policy Directorate, Western Hemisphere Division, in a June 9, 1993, memo to Strub. “This statement will not win friends in Latin America.”



So at the request of the Pentagon, the offending dialogue was eliminated. But that's not all Strub wanted changed.

In the original script, the film begins when a Coast Guard cutter discovers the luxury yacht *Empire Builder* adrift in the warm waters of the Gulf of Mexico, its owner—a close personal friend of the president—brutally murdered. We soon learn that the president's friend and his wife were murdered by Colombian drug lords, and during a meeting at Camp David, the president tells his national security advisor and the director of the CIA that he wants revenge for his friend's death.

"I am sick and tired of those monkeys," the president says in the November 10, 1992, draft of the script. "I promised the American people I'd do something about this drug problem, and we haven't done squat. I want these goofs to get a message."

"What sort of message, Mr. President?" asks his national security advisor.

"That poison of theirs is gonna stop flooding in here like piss from a tall cow," the president angrily responds. "We're gonna shut 'em down! And while we're at it, I wouldn't mind bustin' some butt, if you know what I mean."

"I hear you, sir," says the director of the CIA.

"Let those jaboloneys know we're all fed up with their bullshit!" the president fumes.

"Sir—what you're asking for—it can't be accomplished through routine police agencies," says his national security advisor.

"What the hell you think I got CIA here for?" the president bellows.

"But, Mr. President, even we have limits in this kind of effort," the CIA director responds.

"This type of endeavor requires maximum resources," says the national security advisor.

"Interpret that for me, please," the president says.

"Sir, either our national security is threatened by these people, or it is not," the national security advisor says.

"Yeah—well, I said that, too, didn't I?" the president asks.

"Yes, sir, you did," says the national security advisor.

"Boys, let's just put it this way," the president says. "I want some payback—and y'all better see I get it."

This revenge motif was too much for Strub and the Pentagon, how-

ever. It would have to be eliminated if the producers were to get military assistance for their picture. And it was eliminated.

In the final draft of the script, the president comes off much more diplomatically in the scene where he gives the orders to strike back at the drug lords. Gone is any mention of “payback.” Gone is any mention of “bustin’ some butt.” Gone is any cursing. Gone is any reference to the Colombian drug dealers as “monkeys” and “jaboloneys.”

In the final shooting script, the president is more resolute—angry about the murder of his friend, to be sure, but his orders are based on national security, not revenge. This scene has now been boiled down to its bare essence. The president simply says: “These drug cartels represent a clear and present danger to the national security of the United States.”

Numerous other changes demanded by the military were also made in the script, including the elimination of a scene in which a navy jet shoots down an unarmed civilian airplane that’s transporting a shipment of cocaine. At the Pentagon’s request, the script was changed so that the plane is blown up on the ground by American soldiers—without any loss of life.

“The script has been revised to reflect DOD [Department of Defense] concerns regarding military command and control, recognition of Colombian sovereignty and an improved depiction of the Presidency,” wrote Major Georgi, on December 8, 1993, in his after-action report on the film’s production. “In short, military depictions have become more of a ‘commercial’ for us, more than damage control, and the production offers good public information value.”

Turning films into “commercials” for the military is what it’s all about for Strub and the Pentagon. Whether they succeed or fail is largely dependent on how craven the producers are, and there is no shortage of craven producers in Hollywood.

For Major Georgi, *Clear and Present Danger* was the last of a dozen movies and twenty television shows that he worked on for the Pentagon as a technical advisor before retiring from the army in 1994. He still works occasionally as a military consultant for Hollywood movie producers.

Georgi, a candid man who loves the army, doesn’t pull any punches when discussing the role he and the military play in shaping movies.

“Nothing was easy, but the process was simple,” he says. “I’d get a call at my office in L.A. and they’d say they want military support, and I’d say, ‘Okay, send me a treatment.’ And right then, you could tell if it was going to get support. If they hesitated, it usually meant they had something to hide—something in the script that might not portray the military so well.”

Once a film got approved for military assistance, Georgi would be on the set everyday to make sure that the producers stuck to the approved script and didn’t try to sneak antimilitary scenes into the film that hadn’t been approved.

“On *Clear and Present Danger*, if things were being changed, if they were shooting scenes in different ways, I’d say, ‘Well, I’m taking my toys and I’m going home,’” he recalls with a laugh. “‘I’m taking my tanks and my troops and my location, and I’m going home.’ And that would draw the attention of the producer. That occurred on nearly every production that I supported at some time. On almost every production, there was a disagreement that had to be resolved during shooting. I’d say, ‘Shoot it like it’s in the script,’ and then they would want to shoot it a different way. There were compromises on both sides.

“Always, somewhere in the mind of the producers, they’d try and turn the picture in the direction that they had originally presented to us. They always had that in the back of their minds. It would be my job as a technical advisor to make sure that the movie did not stray substantially from the original approved version.”

But is that an appropriate role for the military? Making sure that scripts don’t change substantially from their original “approved versions”? What does that do to the filmmaking process? Many movies undergo script changes right up until the last day of shooting. The director may not know if something is working on film until he shoots it and sees the rushes—the day’s footage. In Hollywood, the guiding principle is: If something isn’t working, change it. But the job of the Pentagon technical advisor is to put a brake on that process, to keep filmmakers from changing their minds and changing their scripts—which is antithetical to the filmmaking process.



Phil Strub, the head of the Pentagon's film office (*right*), and Maj. David Georgi (*left*), tour the set of *Clear and Present Danger* with an unidentified soldier (*center*). The film's producers agreed to make numerous script changes in exchange for Pentagon assistance. (Photo courtesy of U.S. Army)

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## NOTES

## "CLEAR AND PRESENT DANGER"

8 Dec 93

After over six months of active negotiations, the Paramount Pictures production of "Clear and Present Danger" has moved beyond the coordination and staffing stage enroute to securing DOD approval of military support. Mr. Phil Strub, ATSD(PA)/AV, representatives of J-3 Special Operations Division, and OCPA-LA have been working closely with the producers and writers of the production to develop a script acceptable to the armed forces. Staffing has been accomplished with DOD, J-3, SOCOM, USASOC, USCG, Navy, USAF, CIA, FBI, DEA, and the White House.

The script has been revised to reflect DOD concerns regarding military command and control, recognition of Colombian sovereignty, and an improved depiction of the Presidency. Through the intervention and assistance of a Special Operations technical advisor, guidance has blended operational realism with the exploits of story characters. Special Operations tactical operations have been made credible, military personnel are realistically portrayed, and military equipment and weapons systems are correctly, intelligently and properly used. In short, military depictions have become more of a "commercial" for us more than damage control and the production offers good public information value.

A military requirements list is currently under revision.

Production commenced 8 Nov 93. The USCG will provide support 13-14 Dec.

An informal "deadline" of 17 Dec has been established for DOD project approval to allow the time necessary to coordinate service support in late December, and January - March 1994.

MAJ GEORGI

Maj. David Georgi's notes on *Clear and Present Danger*, December 8, 1993.

# ★ CHAPTER 3 ★

## **“DISCRIMINATION AGAINST SPEECH BECAUSE OF ITS MESSAGE IS PRESUMED TO BE UNCONSTITUTIONAL”\***

Phil Strub’s desk at the Pentagon is stacked with film and TV scripts. Movie posters cover the walls. A bookcase overflows with videotapes of films and TV shows. Strub, fifty-six, is short and balding, but he’s in good shape. He has the look of an accountant who works out a lot. But Strub is no accountant. He’s the Pentagon’s chief liaison to the film and television industry, which makes him one of the most powerful men in show business.

Strub has clout. Top filmmakers regularly trek to his office at the Pentagon, pleading for assistance. If he likes a script, he can recommend that the Pentagon give the producers access to billions of dollars worth of military equipment—nuclear submarines, aircraft carriers, tanks, and jet bombers—to help them make their movie.

And if he doesn’t like a script, the producers will have to change their scripts or go elsewhere to find the ships and jet fighters they need to make their pictures—or not make their movies at all.

“Phil Strub can actually say, ‘I want page 6 and 7 completely thrown out or you don’t get to use our aircraft carrier,’” says Chase Brandon, the CIA’s liaison to the entertainment industry.

Hollywood producers may grumble privately when Strub turns them down—and a few have even done so publicly—but by and large, Hollywood loves Phil Strub. Indeed, in 1998, when the Pentagon announced

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\*1995 U.S. Supreme Court ruling in *Rosenberger v. The University of Virginia*.

that his job would be eliminated as part of an overall downsizing of the Department of Defense, Jack Valenti, president of the Motion Picture Association of America, personally asked then Secretary of Defense William Cohen to spare Strub's job. Dozens of top Hollywood film executives also wrote letters on Strub's behalf. And in the end, the DOD decided to keep him on.

Strub has run the Pentagon's film office since 1989, taking over when Don Baruch, who'd run the office for forty years, retired. His current boss is Pentagon spokesperson Lawrence DiRita, a former special assistant to Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld and a former scholar at the conservative Heritage Foundation.

When he was a young man, Strub wanted to be a filmmaker. After graduating from St. Louis University in 1968, he served a three-year stint in the navy as a public affairs officer, and then went to the University of Southern California's film school. After receiving his master's degree in 1974, Strub started his showbiz career by making radio and TV commercials for the giant advertising agency Young & Rubicam, working on ad campaigns for Holiday Inn, General Foods, Excedrin, and Eastern Airlines.

Strub, who refers to himself as an "accomplished script writer," put-tered around on the fringes of the film business for years, making documentary and educational films, first for the University of New York's medical center in Syracuse, and then for the Walter Reed Army Institute of Research. In 1980, he became the chief TV writer/producer for the U.S. Navy news network, and in 1984 he landed a job as director of the audiovisual program at the Naval Health Sciences Education and Training Command in Bethesda, Maryland, while rising to the rank of commander in the navy reserves.

Five years later, in 1989, Strub was hired to head up the Pentagon's film office. He would never realize his dream of making movies, but he was now in a position to tell real moviemakers how to make theirs.

In 1993, the same year that Strub was playing hardball with the producers of *Clear and Present Danger*, actress Geena Davis was cast to star in *Countermeasures*, a film in which she would play a navy psychiatrist who uncovers a murderous crime ring aboard a nuclear aircraft carrier during the Gulf War. Davis, one of Hollywood's rising stars, was on a roll. Two of her films—*A League of Their Own* and *Hero*—had been released

the year before, and *Countermeasures* was going to be a big-budget action movie for Disney’s Touchstone Pictures.

But there was a problem. Strub didn’t like the script: It didn’t portray the navy in a very flattering light.

“The script conveys a distinctly inaccurate and unpleasant way of life in the Navy, particularly for women,” Strub wrote in a letter, dated June 8, 1993, to Bruce Hendricks, senior vice president of the Walt Disney Company. “Nearly all the crew members show little respect for their jobs, themselves and their shipmates. It appears that only major revisions to the script would alter this depiction, and we assume that you would be unable to accommodate this drastic a change.”

In the original script, written by acclaimed novelist and screenwriter Darryl Ponicsan, the story starts with a jet crashing on the deck of an aircraft carrier in the Persian Gulf. The pilot is killed, but his radio intercept officer, Lt. Ruddick, survives, but he is badly injured and suffering from amnesia. Geena Davis’s character, C.C., who is flown in from an American military base in Turkey to treat Ruddick, is the only female on the ship, and once onboard, she is subjected to constant sexual harassment, primarily from Lt. Landers, an investigator from the Naval Investigative Service who has been aboard the carrier for several months, and who is now investigating the cause of the crash.

As C.C. slowly brings back Ruddick’s memory, she discovers that the crash was no accident; it was caused by sabotage. She also learns that her patient was part of a covert operation, authorized by the White House, to ship jet parts to Iran, and that Landers, the NIS investigator, was part of that undercover operation.

“Who gives an order like that?” she asks Landers.

“Oh, some Marine colonel in a basement office somewhere,” Landers replies, a clear reference to Col. Oliver North’s role in the arms-for-hostages deal that North ran out of the White House basement—a covert operation which came to be known as the Iran-Contra Scandal, which nearly toppled the Reagan administration in 1986.

In Ponicsan’s fictional screenplay, the White House had authorized the covert sale of spare jet parts to Iran because Iran’s fleet of jets, which the United States had sold to Iran during the reign of the shah, had no spare parts left after its eight-year-long war with Iraq, which ended in a



draw in 1988 with the death of hundreds of thousands of combatants and civilians on both sides.

But as she digs deeper, C.C. discovers that something even more unsavory is going on aboard the aircraft carrier. Someone onboard the ship has been using the covert sale of jet parts to Iran to cover an even dirtier operation—the sale of components for a missile guidance system to Iraq for their Scud missiles, which were being used against American troops in the very Gulf War that the carrier had been sent to fight.

As her patient regains his memory, C.C. learns that he was part of the scheme, and that his plane was sabotaged because his pilot, who was also involved, was having second thoughts. But C.C. also discovers that the chief villain—the saboteur of Ruddick's plane and the ringleader behind the sale of missile components to Iraq—is none other than Landers, the NIS officer assigned to investigate the crash.

In the dramatic finale, Landers kills Ruddick, and when he tries to kill C.C., she kills him in self-defense.

Back at the Pentagon, Strub typed out his comments on the script. The Department of Defense, he noted, had three basic criteria for supporting movies. The depictions of military life must be “feasible and authentic”; the film must “inform the public about the military”; and the film must “help military recruiting and retention.”

“There are a number of fundamental aspects of the April 12, 1993, script that prevent it from meeting the criteria,” Strub wrote.

One of the problems, he explained, was the script's portrayal of the Naval Investigative Service. Two years earlier, the NIS had come under fire for its shoddy investigation of the Tailhook Scandal, in which dozens of females were mauled at a gathering of navy pilots in Las Vegas. Making a movie so close on the heels of that controversy wouldn't help the NIS or the navy, Strub reasoned.

“Making the principal villain an agent of the Naval Investigative Service fosters a negative perception of the Service, implicates all agents by association, and reinforces the allegations of a lack of professionalism that was widely reported by the media over the last few years,” Strub maintained.

And then there was the script's reference to the White House's complicity in the covert operation to sell spare jet parts to Iran. “There's no

reason for us to denigrate the White House, or remind the public of the Iran-Contra affair,” Strub wrote.

Disney executives, who were eager to get the Pentagon’s assistance, had hired the legendary John Horton to help clear the way with Strub. Horton, a major in the army during World War II, had gone to work as a location manager for Warner Bros. after the war. In 1948, he was recalled to active duty as a lieutenant colonel and was named chief of the army’s motion picture department, where in 1949 he helped write the Department of Defense’s original policy for providing assistance to commercial filmmakers. He left the army the next year and went back into the movie business, serving as Universal Pictures’ representative in Washington, DC, and then as a producer at Universal and Paramount Pictures. In 1959, he started his own consulting firm, specializing in coordinating cooperation between Hollywood and the military. Over the next forty years, he would help hundreds of producers navigate the Pentagon’s maze of regulations that he helped write so that they could receive the assistance from the Pentagon they needed to make their films and TV shows.

“I had a meeting with the principals of Pacific Western Productions, producers of ‘Countermeasures’ for Disney Touchstone, and Bruce Hendricks, Todd Garner and Jane Goldenring from Disney on June 14 to discuss the film,” Horton told Strub, in a letter dated June 16, 1993. “I reiterated the concerns of the DOD and the Navy which you pointed out in general terms in your letter with comments of June 8, 1993. We had an extremely productive conference for an hour and a half delving into the critical, fundamental aspects of the script that at the present would not allow favorable consideration of the film for DOD assistance.

“The result of this discussion, which in essence capped those which had ensued in-house with the producer and Disney since receiving your letter, is a willingness to make adjustments and corrections in the script that hopefully will allow DOD and the Navy to support the production. They will eliminate the profusion of the ‘sexual harassment’ scenes retaining only those which are considered essential to the story. There will be emphasis placed on the realistic portrayal of the crew and operations of the carrier preparing for Desert Storm. There was a discussion of making Landers, the heavy who is now with the Naval Investigative Service, into a ‘tech rep’ from a defense contractor.”

The producers were willing to change the bad guy from a navy officer to a civilian, and to tone down the sexual harassment of C.C., but there was no getting away from the fact that the movie would be about crime and murder aboard a nuclear aircraft carrier.

Strub still said no, and in the end, the producers could not get the Pentagon's assistance. They tried going to the Spanish navy for a ship, but once the Spaniards found out that the U.S. Navy had rejected the script, they too bowed out.

"It was a pretty cool thriller," Ponicsan recalls, "but you couldn't do it without an aircraft carrier. We were trying to get another carrier from Spain, but that didn't work out because they didn't want to step in where the U.S. military had said no." And in the end, the producers scrapped their plans to make the movie.

"We really needed Navy cooperation and they knew from the beginning that they weren't going to help a movie about a crime that took place on an aircraft carrier," Ponicsan recalls. "The result was that the picture didn't get made. The premise itself really killed the picture."

Ponicsan, who enlisted in the navy in 1962, knows the power of film as a recruiting tool. "One of the reasons I enlisted was because of *From Here to Eternity*," he says with a laugh.

But he maintains that the Pentagon goes too far in trying to force filmmakers to sanitize their portrayals of the military.

"They believe, and I think erroneously, that only over-the-top positive portrayals of the military aid in recruitment and in building morale," he says. "But I think it's a wash. I think those pictures that deal with military warts-and-all still increase recruitment because they make it more interesting."

Ponicsan had had trouble with the navy before on two films he'd written in the 1970s: *Cinderella Liberty*, starring James Caan as a sailor who befriends a hooker and her illegitimate son, and *The Last Detail*, starring Jack Nicholson as a navy guard assigned to escort a sailor to prison. Neither of those films received assistance from the Pentagon because of the subject matter.

"We tried to cooperate with them on *The Last Detail* and *Cinderella Liberty*, but the more you give them, the more they want, and at some point it destroys the integrity of the movie," Ponicsan says. "It was terribly frustrating dealing with the navy on *Cinderella Liberty*. They said

that it was okay to show an enlisted man drunk or swearing, but not an officer. They had this image of an American sailor and they don't want anyone messing with that image. The navy is particularly difficult to deal with. My only gripe with them is that they should let the writer portray the military the way he chooses. To try to control the end result is a mistake on all levels. It doesn't help them and it doesn't help the movie. It seems wrong to me to only cooperate with films that only portray the military in a false way. I don't think they should withhold minimum cooperation for things that aren't a threat to confidentiality or anything like that just because they don't like the content of the movie. That is not in the spirit of democracy. If you need army cooperation, and they deny you any cooperation because of the content, it's clearly a form of censorship.”

Many legal experts, including famed First Amendment attorney Floyd Abrams and renowned constitutional law professor Irwin Chemerinsky, believe that this form of censorship is a blatant violation of the First Amendment.

“This sort of viewpoint-based discrimination by the government in which it favors one form of speech over another is flatly inconsistent with the First Amendment,” says Abrams, who has argued many cases before the Supreme Court and who was cocounsel to the *New York Times* in the Pentagon Papers case. “There are two types of limitations on speech by the government that are especially suspect. The first involves limitations based on the subject being discussed. For example, if the army said, ‘We don't want any movies about the army, so we won't help anyone who is making a film about the army,’ that would be a limitation on the subject and would be constitutionally suspect. But the second category of speech is even more disturbing from any First Amendment perspective; that is, a limitation on speech based upon the viewpoint expressed by the speaker. So if the army says, ‘We will cooperate with some filmmakers, but only ones which please us because of the position it takes about the armed forces,’ that is even more clearly unconstitutional.”

Chemerinsky, a professor of constitutional law at the University of Southern California, agrees.

“The Supreme Court has said that above all, the First Amendment means that the government cannot participate in viewpoint discrimination,” Chemerinsky says. “The government cannot favor some speech

due to its viewpoint and disfavor others because of its viewpoint. The Court has said that when the government is giving financial benefits, it can't decide who to give to, or not give to, based on the viewpoint expressed."

To support his argument, Chemerinsky cites *Rosenberger v. The University of Virginia*, the 1995 U.S. Supreme Court case in which the High Court ruled that student organizations at a state-funded college could not be denied the right to receive the same benefits other student groups receive just because the activities they promote are fundamentally religious in nature.

"It is axiomatic that the government may not regulate speech based on its substantive content or the message it conveys," wrote Supreme Court Justice Anthony Kennedy, who delivered the Court's opinion in the *Rosenberger* case. "In the realm of private speech or expression, government regulation may not favor one speaker over another.

"Discrimination against speech because of its message is presumed to be unconstitutional. These rules informed our determination that the government offends the First Amendment when it imposes financial burdens on certain speakers based on the content of their expression. When the government targets not subject matter but particular views taken by speakers on a subject, the violation of the First Amendment is all the more blatant. Viewpoint discrimination is thus an egregious form of content discrimination. The government must abstain from regulating speech when the specific motivating ideology or the opinion or perspective of the speaker is the rationale for the restriction."

Asked why he thinks the Pentagon has been able to get away with this unconstitutional activity for all these years, Professor Chemerinsky says that the reason is simple: "Nobody has sued."

Abrams agrees.

"They've gotten away with it because they could get away with it," he says. "It hasn't been challenged in the courts."



Screenwriter Darryl Ponicsan. The Pentagon refused to provide assistance to the producers of three of his scripts: *The Last Detail*, *Cinderella Liberty*, and *Countermeasures*. (Photo courtesy of Darryl Ponicsan)

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John Horton, who helped write the Defense Department's guidelines for cooperation with Hollywood, later went to work for the studios to help them secure Pentagon assistance. (Photo courtesy of John Horton)

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JUN 8 '93 15:29 FROM OASD-PA-DDI

PAGE.001

OFFICE OF THE ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF DEFENSE  
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20301-1400

PUBLIC AFFAIRS

JUN 08 1993

Mr. Bruce Hendrix  
Senior Vice President  
Motion Picture Production  
Walt Disney Company  
500 South Buena Vista Street  
Burbank, CA 90521-5622

Dear Mr. Hendrix:

As you know, we've reviewed the April 12, 1993 version of "Countermeasures." The areas of controversy are quite substantial. The script conveys a distinctly inaccurate and unpleasant way of life in the Navy, particularly for women. Nearly all the crew members show little respect for their jobs, themselves, and their shipmates.

It appears that only major revisions to the script would alter this depiction, and we assume that you would be unable to accommodate this drastic a change. For that reason, we've described our concerns, here enclosed, only in general terms.

If you believe that it's possible to resolve these difficulties, we would certainly be willing to provide further information, meet with you and your colleagues, or work with you in any other way to reach an agreement. If not, we hope that we'll be able to work together on a future project of mutual benefit.

Sincerely,

Philip M. Strub  
Special Assistant (Audiovisual)

CC:  
CHINFO  
Mr. John Horton

Enclosure:  
As stated

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Phil Strub's letter about the film *Countermeasures*, dated June 8, 1993.

JUN 8 '93 15:30 FROM OASD-PA-DDI

PAGE.002

Comments on "Countermeasures"

Department of Defense criteria for support:

- Military aspects are feasible, authentic depictions;
- Informs the public about the military;
- Helps military recruiting and retention.

There are a number of fundamental aspects of the April 12, 1993 script that prevent it from meeting the criteria:

1. Characterization of Navy People The overwhelming majority of Navy personnel are completely unrealistic and negative. They're unprofessional, blatantly focussed on personal agenda, and unapologetically sexist if not guilty of outright sexual harassment or sexual assault. Significantly, this behavior extends beyond the criminals to include nearly every other speaking and non-speaking part.

- Even C.C.'s character is initially motivated by pure self-interest. Taking on the assignment, she says, "Get that on my record. Ribbons, Bubby, ribbons!"

- There are racist stereotypes: African-American Seaman Ellis is some kind of servant to the Captain, simplistic and inexplicably devoted. The Captain is attended by a Filipino steward, a scene years out of date.

2. Women Aboard Carriers The astonished reaction of crew members to the presence of a woman aboard the ship is quite unrealistic. Women have been routinely assigned temporarily to aircraft carriers for several years. By the time the film is released their presence will be even more commonplace. By then there may well be women fighter pilots assigned to carrier air wings, with the attendant extensive national media coverage. Audiences are likely to be puzzled or amused by depictions of surprised sailors as they are presently described.

3. Portrayal of NIS Agent Making the principal villain an agent of the (then) Naval Investigative Service fosters a negative perception of the Service, implicates all agents by association, and reinforces the allegations of a lack of professionalism that was widely reported by the media over the last few years.

4. White House complicity in the intrigue There's no reason for us to denigrate the White House, or remind the public of the Iran-Contra affair.

5. Technical Inaccuracies Ancillary compared to above, there are nonetheless a number of these, such as the whole Tomahawk guidance system set-up.

Phil Strub's comments about the film *Countermeasures*, dated June 8, 1993.





# ★ CHAPTER 4 ★

## “REVISIONIST HISTORY”

Peter Almond started out as a producer of TV documentaries in New York before turning to moviemaking. He is a serious man who loves history. So he was shocked in the summer of 1998 when Phil Strub tried to pressure him into changing the historical record for a film he was producing about the Cuban Missile Crisis, *Thirteen Days*, starring Kevin Costner.

That summer, Almond and several members of his production team made the trip to Washington to meet with Strub at his office in the Pentagon, and to try to get him to sign off on their request for military assistance for their film project.

“At one point, half-a-dozen of us were crammed into his little office,” Almond recalls.

But there was a problem. Strub hated their script. He thought it portrayed the Joint Chiefs of Staff as too hawkish and one-sided during the missile crisis of October 1962. But Almond had done his homework and knew that he had gotten his history right.

“They were trying to make the Pentagon different than the way it actually performed [during the missile crisis],” Almond says. “There is no doubt that all that would have satisfied them is to change the history, but they are smart enough to know not to say that. But they didn’t want to support a major film that showed their leadership taking positions that would very likely have led the world on the descent toward real nuclear confrontation.”

Strub told the producers that the Pentagon's chief concern was that the film made it look like the generals—particularly Air Force Gen. Curtis LeMay—would have taken the world down the path to nuclear war if President Kennedy hadn't reined them in.

Strub told the producers that the script was "revisionist history," and that the Pentagon would not assist the filmmakers because their screenplay painted LeMay and the Joint Chiefs in a false and negative light.

In rejecting the producers' request for assistance, Strub, in a July 28, 1998, letter, wrote: "Both General LeMay and General Maxwell Taylor (chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff) are depicted in a negative and inauthentic way as unintelligent and bellicose."

In fact, aside from a few fictionalized scenes that the writer had added for dramatic effect, the story the producers wanted to tell about the conflict between JFK and his generals was historically accurate. And Almond knew it was accurate because JFK had secretly recorded his meetings with the Joint Chiefs, and the John F. Kennedy Library made the tapes available to the public in 1996. The tapes reveal that on October 19, 1962, as JFK was leaning toward imposing a naval blockade of Cuba, LeMay was arguing forcefully for an invasion of the island nation.

"This is almost as bad as the appeasement at Munich," the crusty general said angrily of Kennedy's proposed blockade. "I just don't see any other solution except direct military intervention right now."

Despite the tapes, Strub and the Pentagon had their own version of history, and they were not going to help some movie producers tell it any other way.

The producers, however, refused to change their story.

"The tapes of their conversations show that we had it right," Almond says. "Their positions and recommendations are matters of public record. They laid out the air attack and invasion options and urged them on the president. Perhaps they did it more circumspectly, but we know from the tapes they were contemptuous when they thought no one could hear them. LeMay was crude and smug and all accounts support that. We can document both points: the chiefs support attack and LeMay was a pig! We have heard this from interview sources and have read this and will lay out the references."

But that wasn't good enough for the Pentagon, which routinely insists that movie producers change history in order to make the military look better than it really is.

The Pentagon even insisted that the producers delete a scene in which a U2 reconnaissance pilot is shot down and killed over Cuba. It didn't happen, the Pentagon insisted.

But the historical record is quite clear that it did happen. On October 27, 1962, Maj. Rudolf Anderson was shot down by a surface-to-air missile while photographing a missile installation in Cuba. He was killed when shrapnel punctured his pressure suit, causing it to decompress at high altitude. The Pentagon's own records show that Major Anderson was posthumously awarded the Air Force Cross for his last U2 flight over Cuba.

“Poor Major Anderson's widow and his family know that it happened,” Almond says. “So what happens when you get into these negotiations and discussions with the military, even though you're in desperate need of some of their equipment, they take you down this road of trying profoundly to influence the portrayal of the Defense Department and the military.”

And when the producers showed Strub the letter of condolence that JFK had written to the widow of the pilot, the Pentagon simply stonewalled them.

“They never responded to that,” Almond says.

After more than a year of pleading their case to Strub, the producers finally turned for help to then Senator Fred Thompson (R-TN), a former actor whom the film's director, Roger Donaldson, had once directed in a movie called *No Way Out*, which also starred Kevin Costner, and which was also denied assistance by the Pentagon. Senator Thompson (now a regular on NBC's *Law and Order*) agreed to mention the producers' problem to then Defense Secretary William Cohen, but even Cohen couldn't convince the Pentagon to help the producers.

“He ran into the same roadblock,” Almond says.

The producers would have to find their airplanes somewhere else. So they went to the Philippines, where they rented broken down 1960s-era jet fighters, painted them up, and pulled them around on the ground with trucks to make it appear that they were taxiing on a runway. They used digital effects to simulate a U2 in flight. It was more expensive, but they were able to make the movie they wanted to make, not the one that the Pentagon wanted them to make.

Almond still chafes at the heavy-handed manner in which the Pentagon tried to reshape his movie.

"I think they feel that they are protecting this rather narrow interest that would define itself as films that only romanticize and present the U.S. military in 100 percent favorable light, as you would expect perhaps from television advertising or a commercial," he says from his offices at Beacon Pictures in Santa Monica. "So their interest in artistic responsibility is obviously questionable. There's a kind of devil's brew. The problem that we have from time to time with these big-scale projects that involve military assets is that we're kind of dependent on them for comparatively inexpensive use of the assets in making our stories. So they have us kind of over a barrel. But we had no intention of giving in to their interpretation."

The final insult came in February of 2001, when Costner, who also coproduced the film, offered to hold a special screening of the movie at Ramstein Air Base in Germany. Costner wanted to show it to the troops and to meet and greet the men and women in uniform.

At first, Costner's offer was warmly received by officials at the American base in Germany. It's not every day that a top Hollywood star comes to that part of the world. But soon after, the offer was rejected by the Pentagon. Col. Johnny Whitacker, deputy director of public affairs for the air force, told Costner's public relations agent, Stephen Rivers, why it would be inappropriate to show the film there.

"I'm sure you're aware that the Department of Defense and the individual Armed Services declined support of the production early on because the producers refused to make corrections to the script to ensure the film's historical accuracy—i.e., to try to avoid the 'revisionist history' I'm told it depicts," Whitacker told Rivers in a tersely worded e-mail dated February 28, 2001. "Nor did they cooperate with DOD to guarantee an accurate and appropriate portrayal of military leaders, which it apparently fails to do with Gen. Curtis LeMay, while depicting other officers as liars who disobey orders.

"Hence, it's inappropriate for us to now support a completed film—even tacitly with a special screening—when we refused to support it in production. Therefore, the Air Force respectfully declines your offer of a special screening at Ramstein—or on other USAF installations."

Rivers was angry, particularly in light of the fact that only a few weeks earlier the film had been the first movie screened at the White House for newly elected Pres. George W. Bush.

In an e-mail to Almond about the military’s refusal to host Costner at a special screening in Ramstein, Rivers said: “So much for this idea. I guess the film is good enough for the President of the United States but not the military.”

Changing history is nothing new for the Pentagon. They have been doing it in movies for decades.

Air force officials, for instance, insisted on changing real-life events in Warner Bros.’ *The Perfect Storm*, the blockbuster that starred George Clooney as the captain of a doomed fishing boat.

The Department of Defense’s own guidelines for providing assistance to motion picture and television productions state that “the production must be authentic in its portrayal of actual persons, places, military operations and historical events.” But this was not the case with *The Perfect Storm*, in which the air force’s Air National Guard received credit it didn’t deserve in the film for rescuing a sinking fishing boat.

The Coast Guard, which played a major role in the real-life rescue efforts, had balked at lending assistance to the film production because they did not think the script was accurate. And that’s when the air force stepped in.

“The air force was depicted rather than the Coast Guard,” says Lisa Rawlins, a Warner Bros. executive who dealt with the Pentagon on this and numerous other film projects. “The producers decided that the air force would be the entity that would fly the rescuers out and that the para-rescuers would be air force. In real life they were the Coast Guard.”

The Coast Guard objected to this changing of history, but to no avail. “They were unhappy,” says a source who worked on the film. “The negotiations with various branches of the military were not as smooth as we would have wanted.”

Cdr. Jeff Loftus, director of the Coast Guard’s motion picture and television office, was particularly irked. “They had an Air National Guard helicopter portraying a very dramatic rescue that was actually executed by the Coast Guard,” he says. “There were contentious issues about that.”

As we’ve seen, the military has its own version of history, and the main reasons the service branches want filmmakers to make that history look better than it really was is so that the American people will have a positive opinion about the military, will continue to fund it, and will continue to join up. It’s all about funding and recruiting.



PUBLIC AFFAIRS

OFFICE OF THE ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF DEFENSE  
1400 DEFENSE PENTAGON  
WASHINGTON, DC 20301-1400



July 28, 1998

As you requested, I'm providing this written summation of our concerns regarding the military portrayals as depicted in the December 12, 1997 feature motion picture script "Thirteen Days." In general, we have little in the way of equipment that could be made to match the period and what equipment we do have that might be suitable - such as U-2 aircraft - would not likely be available for the production. Also, we do not believe that the military personnel are shown in a particularly positive nor historically authentic light. For example:

- Both General Lemay and General Taylor are depicted in a negative and inauthentic way as unintelligent and bellicose. The portrayal of Secretary McNamara is also exaggerated for effect.
- There is no evidence to support that there were direct communications between Mr. O'Donnell and military personnel at the squadron level, and these scenes convey a negative and inaccurate impression about command and control.

We recognize that these portrayals serve a significant dramatic purpose in the picture, mainly by providing conflict with and counterpoint to the positive officials in the White House. Therefore, we don't believe that our concerns over the military depictions can be eliminated without significantly and fundamentally altering the script.

We're willing to offer technical advice and would consider the possibility of providing stock footage. If you'd like to discuss this further, please don't hesitate to contact me. We hope to work with you on a future project of mutual benefit, as we did with "Air Force One."

Sincerely,

Philip M. Strub  
Special Assistant for Audiovisual

Cc:  
Dr. Goldberg  
OCPA-LA  
NAVINFO WEST  
SAF-PAWR

Phil Strub's letter to the producers of *Thirteen Days*, dated July 28, 1998.

# ★ CHAPTER 5 ★

## CHANGING HISTORY

In the original screenplay for the 2002 MGM movie *Windtalkers*, there is a scene in which a Marine, nicknamed The Dentist, creeps across a battlefield strewn with the bodies of dead Japanese soldiers. In the original script we see: “The Dentist bent over a dead Japanese soldier, doing what he does, relieving the dead of the gold in their mouth. The Dentist twists his bayonet, struggles to get the gold nugget out of the corpse’s teeth.”

“Come to Poppa,” says The Dentist.

It’s a grisly scene, but it’s one of several that you didn’t see in the movie, which was directed by John Woo and starred Nicolas Cage, Christian Slater, and Adam Beach. The scene was written out of later drafts of the screenplay after Phil Strub and the Marine Corps complained about it.

After receiving the original *Windtalkers* script, dated January 28, 2000, Strub passed it along to Capt. Matt Morgan, who was then the head of the Marine Corps’ film liaison office in Los Angeles. Morgan, six feet four and boyish, liked the script a lot, but had some major reservations.

In a March 3, 2000, memo to Strub, Morgan discussed the scene in which “the Dentist digs gold from jaws of corpses.”

“This has to go,” Morgan wrote to Strub. “The activity is un-Marine, and more representative of a conscript force. The Marines were volunteers. I recommend these characters be looting the dead for intelligence,



or military souvenirs—swords, knives, field glasses. Loot is still not cool, but more realistic and less brutal.”

Strub agreed. “Stealing gold teeth, yep, has to go!” he told Morgan in a March 7 reply.

Four days later, Morgan sent a memo to Terence Chang, director John Woo’s producing partner. “The ‘Dentist’ character displays distinctly un-Marine behavior,” he told Chang. “He is, in fact, committing an atrocity. While I recognize the war in the Pacific was brutal, I don’t see a need to portray a Marine as a ghoul.”

In the next draft of the script, dated June 23, 2000, the scene was eliminated, as was the entire character of The Dentist.

“The scene just went away,” Morgan says during an interview at his office on Wilshire Boulevard. “It completely went away.”

The film’s screenwriters, Joe Batteer and John Rice, fought to keep the scene in the film, but they were badly outnumbered—by the director, the Marine Corps, and the studio, which wanted to keep the Marine Corps happy. In the end, the writers relented and killed the scene.

“That scene’s not in the film,” Batteer says. “Through Terence Chang we got the word. It was, ‘You gotta lose the filling pulling.’ We saw Morgan’s missive about the ghouliness. We argued that it was true, but we ultimately relented and yanked it, no pun intended. We tried to argue our case, but it was a fine line because we had to appease the Marine Corps and the studio. The studio wanted the cooperation from the Marines.”

“They said a Marine would never do that,” Rice says of the tooth-pulling scene. “But who can say one Marine would never do that? The Marine Corps had a lot of problems with that.”

“People did those kinds of things,” Chang says of the tooth-pulling scene, “but the Marines would rather not have us portray Marines in that light.”

*Windtalkers* is a fictional accounting of the Code Talkers’ story, yet it is based on historical facts. But when the Pentagon has a hand in the drafting of screenplays—even fictional stories—questions arise about whose version of history is being portrayed. The DOD’s guidelines for assisting movies say “the production must be authentic in its portrayal of actual persons, places, military operations and historical events. Fictional portrayals must depict a feasible interpretation of military life, operations and policies.”

But despite his claim that the kind of atrocity committed by The Dentist in the original script was “un-Marine,” such events actually did occur during the war. Indeed, the National Archives has footage of a Marine yanking gold teeth from the jaw of a dead Japanese soldier.

Questioned about his version of Marine history, Morgan acknowledged that the Marines had committed such crimes during the war. Morgan says that when he met with Chang, he told the producer, “Okay. Here’s the problem. Now you can look at various books about Marines in World War II, and this obviously happened. I know that these things happened. Horrible, awful atrocities happened, especially in the Pacific. And that was different from what happened in Europe because those were white people fighting white people, and these were, you know, white people fighting Asians. And so, because we didn’t look like each other, we tended to do more dehumanizing things. That’s a fact.”

The DOD and the Marine Corps weren’t the only ones worried about the script. Morgan says he first learned of the project in 1999 while in Texas providing military assistance to the popular TV show *Walker, Texas Ranger*. He got a frantic phone call from an assistant at movie producer Gale Anne Hurd’s Los Angeles–based production company.

“Have you seen the *Reporter*?” the assistant asked, referring to the venerable Hollywood trade paper.

“No,” Morgan replied.

“John Woo is going to be doing this movie about the Code Talkers and it’s about these guys and they’re supposed to kill the Code Talkers,” said the angry assistant. “We think it’s disgraceful. You guys have to stop this.”

Morgan was perplexed about the caller’s distress. This was the first he’d heard of a movie project based on the Code Talkers—Navajo Indians who joined the Marines during World War II and used their native language as part of a code that the Japanese were never able to break. Hurd’s assistant faxed him the story from the *Reporter*. It said that Nicolas Cage would play a Marine guard assigned to protect a Code Talker—and to kill him in the event of capture by the Japanese.

When he got back to the Marine Corps’ film liaison office in Los Angeles, Morgan called Hurd’s production company for clarification and set up a meeting.

“I came to find out that Gale Anne Hurd had a competing Navajo

Code Talker project,” Morgan says with a laugh. “And they were like, ‘You need to call them and tell them that they can’t do this movie!’ And I’m like, ‘Hey, you know, this is a First Amendment issue here. I can’t just call up and say, ‘You can’t do that movie.’”

Morgan, a sincere and dedicated Marine, wouldn’t try to stop the movie. That was never an option. But he was not averse to suggesting that changes be made in the screenplay that would cast the Marines in a more positive light than originally scripted.

Another scene in the original script that Morgan and Strub didn’t like involved a war crime committed by the lead character, Cpl. (later Sgt.) Joe Enders, played by Nicolas Cage. In the original screenplay, Cage kills an injured Japanese soldier who is attempting to surrender by blasting him with a flamethrower. After Morgan complained, however, that scene was also eliminated.

In his March 3 memo to Strub, Morgan wrote: “Killing this man is potentially a war crime, and an experienced Marine in a signal unit would know how rare and valuable a Japanese prisoner is.”

Morgan relayed his concerns to Chang, and that scene, too, was written out of the script. “In the end,” he says, “John (Woo) didn’t like that scene either, and it went away.”

Once again, the screenwriters had fought to keep their vision intact, but in the end, they had to bow to pressure from the Marine Corps and the director.

“We fought very hard to keep something along those lines,” Batteer says of the flamethrower scene. “It showed that Enders was enraged and wanted to kill Japanese. We didn’t want to paint him in a positive light. We wanted to show him as a damaged guy.”

Chang says that he and Woo “hated that scene” because “it was too brutal. It would be very hard for the audience to sympathize with Enders later on in the movie.”

As in any film production, tensions can arise about whose vision—the writer’s or the director’s or the producer’s—is going to make it to the screen. But when the military is involved, the writer almost always loses.

“Everybody has an agenda,” says screenwriter Batteer. “It’s a collaborative art form. You have the writer and the director and the studio, and in this case, you also have the USMC, and everybody has their points of view, and everybody compromises.”

The military also demanded that the producers change a scene in which Enders is given direct orders to kill his Navajo Code Talker in the event of imminent capture. The battle over this scene raged for weeks, even though, like the deleted scenes that depicted atrocities and war crimes committed by U.S. Marines, it was based on the historical record. But once again the Marine Corps' version of history would clash with the screenwriters'. Only this time the writers' version was backed, not just by the Code Talkers themselves, but by the U.S. Congress.

It was pouring rain in Washington, DC, on the morning of July 26, 2001, as the black limousines pulled up in front of the Capitol building. Black umbrellas popped open as the A-list guests emerged from the long line of limos and hurried into the Capitol Rotunda. Senators, movie stars, and top military brass were on hand. So was Pres. George W. Bush. But the stars of the day were four old Navajo Code Talkers, former Marines who had helped win the war in the Pacific so many years ago. The Japanese never broke the code, and after the war, an American general said that the Marines could not have won the battle of Iwo Jima without the Code Talkers. The code was so top secret that the military did not disclose its existence until 1969.

And now, all these years later, they were going to receive Congressional Gold Medals—the nation's highest civilian honor—at a ceremony inside the ornate rotunda.

Screenwriters Batteer and Rice, whose film had just finished shooting in Hawaii, were also on hand, sitting just a couple of seats back from the front row. They had a keen interest in the ceremony, and the irony of it was not lost on them. They had run into problems with the Pentagon over a key plot point—one that the Pentagon said was false, but which Congress said was true—that the Code Talkers' Marine guards had been given direct orders to kill them in the event of imminent capture.

"Our story hangs on that in a lot of ways," Batteer says.

"But the Marines said it never happened, and insisted that the script be changed. There is no documented evidence that there was such an order," Morgan says. "It's fiction."

In the end, producers Alison Rosenzweig and Tracie Graham-Rice, who had originally brought the project to MGM, had to reluctantly agree to tone down that angle if they wanted to get the military's assistance.

"The filmmakers had to change the script," says a source on the film. "What ends up in the movie is that it is an implied order, not a direct order. The DOD would not let them say the words 'order' or 'kill.'"

But Batteer and Rice had done their homework, finding numerous instances in the historical record to support this element of the story. And besides, how could the Pentagon know today what orders were given in the field more than fifty years ago?

"We felt it was true," Rice says. "The Pentagon could never know, but their inherent tendency was to deny it, knowing that we could never prove it."

Chang also believes it's true. "The whole movie was based on that assumption," he says. "We did talk to Code Talkers, and they said that was true. Why would they lie to me? But I also understand the Marines' position."

Over the years, several of the real Code Talkers have said that they were told of the orders to kill them.

John Brown Jr., one of the original twenty-nine Code Talkers, told *Reader's Digest* that he knows that he was to be shot if he were in danger of falling into enemy hands.

"The Marine order was to let them shoot you if you were captured," he said. "That was war. We were obligated."

Carl Gorman agreed. Gorman was the oldest of the original Code Talkers. He died in 1998 at the age of ninety. Two years earlier, he was interviewed by Harry Smith, on the *CBS Evening News*, about his experiences during the war.

"Orders was given that if any of the Code Talkers being captured, shoot the Code Talkers," Gorman told Smith in his imperfect English.

Batteer and Rice believed the Navajo sources, and based their story on the crisis of conscience a Marine faces when he is given orders that may lead to his having to kill a fellow Marine. They finished the first draft of their script on July 1, 1999, and handed it over to their producers at MGM.

In the original version of the script, Cpl. Joe Enders, played by Nicolas Cage, is given those direct orders by a Marine major, who tells Enders: "We can't risk one of our Code Talkers falling into enemy hands. If there's a chance that he might be captured, the code will be deemed more important than the man. If it comes to it, Enders, you're going to have to take your guy out."

The Marine Corps, however, cringes at the idea of Marines being ordered to kill other Marines.

"We got a call from the producers," Batteer recalls. "I think it was Terence Chang, who said, 'We need to alter some of the language in the orders-given scene.' He said there were concerns by the Marines about those orders being so explicit. They essentially denied that such orders were given. The Pentagon requested that the language be altered to make it not quite so specific, so that those words were not spoken. We got notes from Capt. Matt Morgan. The Marines wanted some changes."

After lengthy negotiations, the producers agreed to change the script so that the orders to kill the Code Talkers in the event of capture could be suggested, but not stated specifically.

In the final shooting version of the script, dated May 4, 2000, in the scene where the Marine major gives Corporal Enders his assignment, the dialogue has been changed so that the major now says: "Corporal, what I'm about to tell you is not to leave this room. Under no circumstances can you allow your Code Talker to fall into enemy hands. Your mission is to protect the code at all costs. Do you understand, corporal?"

Here, the message is implied, but not stated directly: the words "orders" and "take your guy out" have been eliminated.

Even so, in the end, the writers were relieved that the Pentagon would allow them to suggest that orders to kill the Code Talkers had been given—even if they couldn't come right out and say it.

"If we couldn't intimate that the bodyguard might kill the Code Talker, then we would have had to go outside the military or not make the movie," Rice says. "But we got that."

And even though they made the changes requested by the Pentagon, Rice and Batteer feel that the integrity of their film has been maintained.

"The integrity is still there," Rice believes. "It did not hurt us a bit. I think it made us better writers to make it more subtle. The Pentagon may not have been trying to help us on this point, but I think they did."

Batteer was relieved that the Pentagon didn't insist on more changes. "We were happy that that's all they wanted," he says.

On December 21, 2000, Pres. Bill Clinton signed legislation that authorized the president to present Congressional Gold Medals to the twenty-nine original Code Talkers, and Silver Medals to more than four hundred other Code Talkers.

And now, on July 26, 2001, with thunder clapping outside the Capitol Rotunda, Batteer and Rice watched as President Bush presented the medals to four of the five surviving original Code Talkers. One of those old Marines was John Brown Jr., who maintains that his Marine guard had been ordered to kill him if he was in danger of being captured.

“Today we give these exceptional Marines the recognition they earned so long ago,” Bush somberly intoned as he handed out the medals.

The language of the legislation was unequivocal: “Some Code Talkers were guarded by fellow Marines, whose role was to kill them in case of imminent capture by the enemy.”

As they waited for the ceremony to begin, Rice and Batteer were well aware that the very same language the Pentagon had forced the producers to remove from their screenplay—the orders to kill the Code Talkers in the event of capture—was contained in the bill Congress had passed authorizing Bush to present the medals to the Code Talkers.

“It was kind of ironic,” Rice says.

The Marine Corps, however, still insists that no such orders were ever given, and is trying to get Congress to rewrite the wording of the bill that gave the Code Talkers their medals.

# ★ CHAPTER 6 ★

## BENDING OVER BACKWARD

Some filmmakers, no matter how hard they try, are not able to change their scripts enough to satisfy the Pentagon, although the lengths to which they will go to get Pentagon assistance can be startling.

In 1995, Dean Devlin was desperate to get military assistance for a film he had written and was going to produce: *Independence Day*. The film, about an alien invasion of Earth, was going to be expensive, but he could save millions if he could convince the Pentagon to give him the jet fighters, tanks, and helicopters he needed. But he was having trouble convincing the Pentagon that his picture would be good for the military. The Department of Defense didn't like the script; it wasn't pro-military enough.

"I'm not optimistic that this project will ever qualify for DOD assistance," a DOD official wrote in an internal memo after reading the first draft of Devlin's script. "There's nothing in the script so far that we won't get automatically if they make the film without us. The plot is the same tired story of nasty aliens ruthlessly brushing aside the pathetically desperate, inappropriate and completely futile attempts by the military to counter-attack. . . . If we can buy the basic plot, there's a huge amount of work ahead of us to increase the realism and positive military portrayals. Is the production company willing to make these changes?"

As it turned out, Devlin was willing to make any number of changes to get the military's assistance.



In Devlin's original script, the military's attempts to fight off the alien invaders are thwarted at every turn. Swarms of jet fighters are swatted aside by the aliens' superior technology. Even an atom bomb, detonated right on top of one of the aliens' spacecraft, is totally ineffective. In the end, it's a civilian, played by Jeff Goldblum, who comes up with the strategy to successfully combat the invaders, and it's a civilian—and drunken—crop duster, played by Randy Quaid, whose heroic sacrifice—flying a jet into one of the aliens' giant troop carriers—turns the tide in the war.

Sure, there is a Marine Corps captain, played by Will Smith, who helps destroy the aliens' mother ship, but in the original script he is portrayed as a playboy who has an out-of-wedlock relationship with a stripper. Not the kind of image the Marine Corps wants of its officers.

Not surprisingly, the Pentagon wanted Devlin to make "serious revisions" before they would agree to help him. The DOD told Devlin that if he wanted the military's assistance, he would have to address numerous "significant problem areas as script is currently written."

The biggest problem, the DOD told Devlin, was that there are "no true military heroes" in the film. "The military appears impotent and/or inept; all advances in stopping aliens are the result of actions by civilians."

The Marine Corps had the same problem with the script. "The overall scenario does not leave the public with a positive impression of the military and its capabilities," Lt. Dustin Salem, deputy director of the Marine Corps' public affairs office in Los Angeles, wrote in a May 15, 1995, memo to William Fay, one of the film's producers.

"We see military bases and aircraft decimated by the aliens and ultimately it takes a civilian to stop the alien takeover. . . . As it stands, Steve Hiller [played by Will Smith] is the main military hero. Steve's cavalier attitude and irresponsible actions—saying 'let's kick some alien ass,' giving fireworks to a child, etc.—do not reflect the maturity and leadership traits that a real Marine Corps officer must have. Steve may be a crack pilot, but he is no leader of Marines. Although Steve acts heroically in the end, he has some serious character flaws that need to be addressed. The fact that Steve dates a stripper also reflects poorly on his character."

The Pentagon also hated the idea of a drunken crop duster being allowed to fly an F-15 jet fighter. "We would not want public to think just

anyone can fly such hi-tech aircraft,” the Pentagon said in an internal memo. “Can’t have drunken pilot.”

Another problem with the script, the DOD said, was that the “characterization of Defense Secretary and Joint Chiefs of Staff chairman are both negative.”

The DOD also had a major problem with one of the script’s key plot points—that the air force had found a flying saucer at Roswell, New Mexico, in 1947 and was keeping it under wraps—and a secret from the president—at a secret military facility known as Area 51.

“The incident at Roswell is a myth,” the DOD told Devlin. “DOD would not want to support a film which perpetuates myth. DOD cannot hide info from President—i.e. aliens and ship in custody.”

Stung by the military’s criticism of his script, Devlin told Phil Strub, the DOD’s chief liaison to the film industry, that he was ready and willing to make major revisions to his script to make it more palatable to the Pentagon. This, he said in a May 8, 1995, letter to the Pentagon, will ensure that the film “enhances recruiting and retention” of military personnel—the military’s main reason for offering assistance to producers.

“We’re going to make ‘Star Wars’ and ‘Top Gun’ look like paper airplanes,” Devlin told Strub. “Just wait. There has never been any aerial footage like this before. If this doesn’t make every boy in the country want to fly a fighter jet, I’ll eat this script.”

In his letter, Devlin told Strub that he had made numerous script changes to address the military’s concerns. Responding to the Pentagon’s complaint that the film has “no true military heroes,” Devlin promised that several military characters portrayed in the film would be strengthened and given more positive roles, and that at least two of the civilians would be given military backgrounds.

He told Strub that he would give Jeff Goldblum’s scientist character a “military background” to make him more appealing to the Pentagon, and that the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff would also be treated more positively than he had been in the original script.

“General Grey is now a more supportive, energized character,” Devlin told Strub. And he told Strub that he would rewrite the script so that Randy Quaid’s crop-dusting character would be given a background as a “type-rated” jet pilot so that his suicide mission against the alien troop carrier would be more believable.

“We believe that by strengthening the military aspect of these characters, we’ll portray the military experience in a more positive and alluring portrait,” Devlin wrote. “The military is now much more effective.”

Devlin told Strub that the character played by Will Smith “no longer drinks beer and realizes that if he wants to succeed in the military, he’ll have to ‘grow up.’” This, Devlin wrote, should add to the “authentic and feasible interpretation of military life, operations and policy.”

Devlin also told Strub, “We’ve removed the ‘Roswell Incident’ and ‘Area 51’ from the domain of the military. Both incidents, now in the script, are part of a fictional government agency called the National Information Agency.”

One of the film’s chief human villains, a character called Albert Nimziki (played by actor James Rebhorn), had initially been scripted as being secretary of defense, under whose purview these secret installations fell. Devlin, however, assured the Pentagon that this character had been “changed to White House Chief of Staff” and no longer had any ties to the military.

“We believe that by altering these things, we’ve put the military in a better and more realistic light,” Devlin wrote.

Even so, Devlin was not able to satisfy the military, and in the end, the film did not receive any assistance from the Pentagon, and many of the changes that Devlin had promised in exchange for access to the Pentagon’s military hardware were deleted from the final shooting script. But the lengths to which Devlin was willing to change the script in the hope of getting military assistance shows just how much power the military has over Hollywood filmmakers.

Director Ridley Scott also bent over backward in 1996 in an attempt to appease the Pentagon and to get them to provide assistance for the making of *G.I. Jane*, which starred Demi Moore as a female recruit trying to get into the Navy SEALs. In the end, however, Scott couldn’t change the script enough to satisfy the navy, but it wasn’t for a lack of trying. “The deal breaker was I wanted her to shave her head, and they said she wouldn’t do that,” Scott says with a laugh. “I was told that that was ‘faddish,’ that I can’t have her shave her head.”

Another problem with the film was the title itself—*G.I. Jane*. The

navy pointed out that “GI” is an army term, and that there are no GIs in the navy.

But there were many more changes that the navy wanted him to make in the script. Indeed, Scott complained to the navy that they had found “problems on every page” of the script. The navy, however, assured him that they wanted him to make changes on only twenty-two of the pages.

One of those changes involved a scene in which a male SEAL recruit has a problem urinating in a foxhole in front of Moore’s female character. Navy Cdr. Gary Shrout, head of the navy’s office of information in Los Angeles, told Scott: “While addressing issues related to the presence of women in front-line ground combat, the urination scene in the foxhole carries no benefit to the U.S. Navy.”

A few days later, Scott wrote back to Shrout, saying: “This scene has been eliminated.” Scott also agreed to “remove,” “adjust,” or “tame” more than a dozen other scenes the navy found objectionable, but in the end, it was not enough to satisfy the navy overseers, who ultimately refused to provide assistance to the film.



# ★ CHAPTER 7 ★

**“THE PRODUCERS WILL  
‘PUNCH IT UP’ IN ANY  
MANNER WE DICTATE”**

The producers of *Jurassic Park III* were having a tough time coming up with a good ending for their movie. The heroes had battled prehistoric dinosaurs on a jungle island throughout most of the film, and now the producers needed an exciting way to rescue them. An early draft of the screenplay simply had the State Department sending a helicopter to pluck them off the island, but that wasn't exciting enough. So the producers decided to call in the navy and the Marines.

“We've been contacted by the producers of 'Jurassic Park III' with a request to use Navy/USMC assets to 'save the day' at the end of the movie,” wrote Cdr. Bob Anderson, head of the navy's film office in Los Angeles, in a December 4, 2000, memo. “Even though it is a short scene, the producers will 'punch it up' in any manner we dictate to make sure the audience knows that we are saving the people threatened by the big lizard!”

In the last version of the script written before the navy and the Marine Corps were contacted, the film ends with Ellie, played by Laura Dern, bringing a helicopter provided by the State Department to rescue her old boyfriend, Dr. Alan Grant (Sam Neill), and his party of stranded adventurers, Paul Kirby (William H. Macy), Amanda Kirby (Tea Leoni), and Eric Kirby (Trevor Morgan), as they make it to the beach just ahead of the rampaging dinosaurs.

In this version of the script, dated November 7, 2000, a helicopter sits

on the beach waiting to rescue the party. As Dr. Grant climbs aboard, he is surprised to see Ellie there to greet him. “Ellie?!” he says in astonishment.

“She didn’t just send help,” the script says. “She came herself.”

Above the whirr of the rotor blades, Dr. Grant asks her: “How did you get here?”

“Good friend in the State Department,” she replies.

After a few more lines of banter, the chopper lifts off and the movie is over.

To make the ending more exciting, the producers wanted the Marine Corps to stage a small-scale amphibious landing on a remote beach in Kauai, Hawaii, where the film was shooting.

No problem, Strub told the filmmakers after reading the script. The Pentagon would agree to loan them two navy SH-60 Seahawk helicopters and their three-man crews, four Marine Corps amphibious assault vehicles, and eighty Marines to storm the beaches for seven days of shooting on the island in January of 2001. And all they had to do in return was add one little line of dialogue to the rescue scene, and to make sure that the navy logo was clearly visible when the helicopters were shown on screen.

“All we ask is that the military men look tactically sound and that there be a line of dialogue that says the Marines are there to take care of the situation or to evacuate our main characters, and that the Navy helicopters are identified,” wrote Capt. Shawn D. Haney, the Marine Corps’ project officer assigned to the film, in a letter to the producers, dated December 19, 2000.

In the next version of the script, dated December 22, 2000—just three days after Captain Haney asked for a new line of dialogue to be added, and just three weeks after Commander Anderson wrote his memo about the producers being willing to punch up the script “in any manner we dictate”—the navy and the Marines were written into the script. In this version, the military saves the day, and all mention of the State Department’s role in assisting in the rescue is eliminated.

At the end of the film in this version of the script, the stage directions read: “We pan to reveal a massive military presence off the coast, half a dozen U.S. Navy warships. A helicopter gunship rests on the beach, rotors still turning. Never before have steel and firepower looked so comforting. Amanda and Paul embrace, then kiss, the moment getting the best of them.”

Laura Dern is no longer waiting in the helicopter waiting to greet them, but we learn that she has sent the military to rescue them. And in the movie, as Dr. Grant and the little boy, Eric, walk toward the military rescue party, Eric tells Dr. Grant: “You have to thank her now. She sent the Navy and the Marines.”

That one little line of dialogue was all the Pentagon wanted: just one little plug to let the audience know who the real heroes are.

And at the end of the movie, as the helicopter lifts off, the navy logo is clearly visible on both sides for the audience to see.

In the movies, when companies pay producers to show their products on screen, it’s called “product placement.” But when the government provides incentives to producers to make the military look good in their movies, it’s known by a different name. It’s called “propaganda.”





# ★ CHAPTER 8 ★

## **“THE MOONING OF A PRESIDENT BY A UNIFORMED SOLDIER IS NOT ACCEPTABLE CINEMATIC LICENSE”**

In 1993, the producers of *Forrest Gump* were eager to get military assistance for their film. They needed Chinook helicopters and other Vietnam War-era military equipment, and they wanted to shoot part of the film on Parris Island, a Marine Corps base in South Carolina. So on June 21 they submitted four copies of their screenplay to the Pentagon for “review and comments.”

The army, it turned out, had lots of comments: they wanted major script changes in return for their cooperation.

In an internal memo dated June 29, 1993, the army complained that “harsh language is in evidence throughout the script,” and that “sexual content is excessive and gratuitous.”

But the army’s chief complaint was with *Forrest Gump* himself. They felt that the half-witted lead character, to be played by Tom Hanks, was not the kind of soldier the army would have recruited during the Vietnam War. According to an internal Army Department memo, the film’s screenplay gives “the generalized impression that the Army of the 1960s was staffed by the guileless, or soldiers of minimal intelligence.” That impression, the army said, “is neither accurate nor beneficial to the Army.”

In fact, the army did recruit soldiers of subpar intelligence during the Vietnam War, and after reading the original script, the Marine Corps noted that the film appeared to be alluding to this little-known chapter in American military history.

"After college, Forrest is drafted to serve in Vietnam in the Army," wrote Lt. Col. Jerry Broeckert, head of the Marine Corps' public affairs office in Los Angeles, in his evaluation of the script. "Although not explicitly stated in the story, he's portrayed as being one of 'McNamara's 100,000 Project.'"

Broeckert was referring to a plan initiated by Secretary of Defense Robert S. McNamara in 1966 in which soldiers were recruited from the ranks of those who had previously failed to pass the armed forces' intelligence tests. Altogether, more than 350,000 of these men—cruelly nicknamed the "Moron Corps" by their fellow soldiers—were brought into the armed forces, and most of them ended up going into the army—and to Vietnam. At least one was reported to have had an IQ of 62—much lower than Gump's, which in the movie was said to be 80.

But the Pentagon falsely insisted that nothing like this ever happened.

On July 7, 1993, Phil Strub, the head of the Pentagon's film office, wrote a letter to Charles Newirth, the film's coproducer, telling him that the Department of Defense would not lend assistance to the producers unless they agreed to make some major changes to the script.

"For us to provide assistance, the military depictions must be historically accurate or feasible, of information value to the public, and of benefit to recruiting and retention," Strub wrote. "Unfortunately, 'Forrest Gump' doesn't meet these criteria. The principal problem is one of inaccuracy, in that Forrest Gump appears to have been recruited and trained to serve in a special unit comprised solely of others like him, then led into combat in Vietnam by an inexperienced officer as a kind of inhumanly senseless, doomed experiment. . . . If you are willing to address these fundamental concerns, we welcome the opportunity of discussing them with you."

In the draft of the script first submitted to the Pentagon, dated April 23, 1993, Forrest Gump describes his army unit this way: "What made our unit special was that we were all pretty much alike. We were all slower than molasses." He then says: "Somebody later told me it was an experiment to put together a group of dumbos and half-wits who wouldn't question orders."

This, the Pentagon said, would have to be changed if the producers wanted the army's assistance. And it was promptly changed.

A week after receiving Strub's letter, Newirth and Steve Starkey, one

of the film’s producers, wrote a letter back to Strub, saying that they “have attempted to reshape the screenplay so that it addresses all the concerns you raised with us.” They also told Strub: “If you have any further comments, please let us know and we will attempt to facilitate them.”

In the next version of the script they submitted to the Pentagon, all references to Gump’s unit being made up entirely of half-wits were eliminated. Gump’s best friend in the army, the shrimp-loving Bubba, is still as dumb as Gump, but the rest of the men in their outfit are portrayed as normal soldiers.

In the new script, the line in which Gump describes the other men in his unit as being “slower than molasses” has been eliminated, as was Gump’s explanation that this was “an experiment to put together a group of dumbos and half-wits who wouldn’t question orders.” And still another line, in which Gump’s commanding officer refers to his men as “a bunch of idiots,” was also deleted.

The Pentagon had gotten one of the major items on its wish list changed, but the army was still not satisfied with the script. It still didn’t like the scene in which Forrest shows his war wound to Pres. Lyndon B. Johnson. In that scene, Gump bends over, pulls down his pants, and shows the president the scar on his butt. “The ‘moonin’ of a President by a uniformed soldier is not acceptable cinematic license,” the army said in an internal memo.

The army also didn’t like the way Gump referred to his commanding officer—Lt. Dan Taylor—by his rank and first name. That’s an “improper way to address a senior officer,” an army script reader wrote in the script’s margins.

And they didn’t like a scene in which Lt. Dan is seen crying after being ordered to send his men on a dangerous mission. This, an army script reader wrote in the script margin, is “not a great portrayal of leadership.”

So despite the changes the producers did make, the army decided to pass on providing full cooperation to *Forrest Gump*.

“In its current form,” the army said in a memo, “the Department of the Army cannot recommend approval of the project.”

Newirth, who today is the head of physical production for Revolution Studios—the studio that produced *Black Hawk Down*—is philosophical about not receiving the army’s assistance for *Forrest Gump*.

"We always try to accommodate the Department of Defense," he says. "That's what we do when it's not going to compromise the film. But we just couldn't make it work. We weren't able to get to a place where they were happy and we were happy, so we decided to move on and make the film without the military. It was all very amicable. Phil Strub is a huge ally of Hollywood and will always do the best he can to try to make things work."

But even after the army turned them down, the Marine Corps said that they were willing to help out on *Forrest Gump* if the producers would make just one simple change: They wanted the producers to make Forrest Gump a Marine.

In an internal memo, Lt. Col. Jerry Broeckert, director of the Marine Corps' film office in Los Angeles, wrote: "I reviewed the script and informed the production company that in order for the Marine Corps to support the project, the character would have to be written as a Marine along with a few other minor changes."

The filmmakers, however, declined the Marine Corps' offer.

"After several discussions, the production company, on Aug. 4, 1993, expressed a reluctance, for creative reasons, to change the portrayal of the character from Army to Marine," Broeckert wrote in a memo. "The book was written as Army and the director, Robert Zemeckis, sees the character as Army."

But the Marine Corps' willingness to help a film that the army wouldn't shows just how arbitrary the military's approval process really is. Indeed, the Pentagon's own documents show that the Marine Corps is considerably more lenient than the other services in allowing certain unflattering depictions as long as the overall message is a positive one. The Marines were willing to step in and provide assistance to *An Officer and a Gentleman* after the navy refused to help—if the producers would have been willing to change the lead character, played by Richard Gere, from navy to Marines. And they were willing to do the same on *A Few Good Men* after the navy turned down the producers' request for assistance. The producers of those two films also declined to change their characters to Marines, and just like *Forrest Gump*, did not receive the Pentagon's support and approval.

# ★ CHAPTER 9 ★

## REWRITING *RENAISSANCE MAN*

The army loved *Renaissance Man*. The 1994 comedy, which starred Danny DeVito as an unemployed advertising executive who reluctantly takes a job on an army base teaching Shakespeare to under-achieving recruits, became a recruiting poster for the army after the filmmakers caved in to the Pentagon's demands for script changes. An entire scene was rewritten by the army, dialogue was changed, and one character—a “sleazy” recruiting officer—was cut out of the Touchstone Pictures' film altogether.

“The movie was a ninety-minute commercial for the army,” says Maj. David Georgi, the army's technical advisor assigned to oversee the film's production. “It showed that the army cares. It was a great feel-good story.”

And once the script was sanitized, director Penny Marshall—of *Laverne & Shirley* fame—got all the military equipment, personnel, and locations she asked for.

“They gave us a lot of stuff,” Marshall says, noting that the film would have easily cost an extra \$1 million to produce without the army's assistance. “We saved a lot.”

“We went to Ft. Jackson, South Carolina, and we basically took over that base for a month-and-a-half,” Major Georgi recalls. “We had carte blanche use of trainees, the ranges, and the training areas. Just for one scene, where Danny is awakened, there are one thousand troops doing

exercise outside his window. We had to shoot all night long. We had one thousand troops until midnight, and a different one thousand troops after midnight. Those two thousand troops were on a no-pay basis. The military made them available for the shooting. But I made sure we had every candy bar in the world, and they went through thousands of candy bars that night, and all the coffee and cocoa they could drink.”

But shooting the film on an army base wasn’t Marshall’s idea. “That was the producers’ decision, to save money and shoot on the military base,” she says. “They wanted to save a dollar with all the extras and tanks and blah, blah, blah.”

The army, however, hadn’t always been so eager to help the film project. Indeed, the army hated the original script.

“Assistance clearly does not appear to be in the best national interest, as the portrayals of Army life are neither authentic nor plausible,” wrote Col. George Stinnett, public affairs chief of the Army’s Training and Doctrine Command, in a May 28, 1993, memo to his boss, Maj. Gen. Charles W. McClain Jr., chief of the Army’s Public Affairs Office in Washington, DC, after reading the original script. “Without significant revisions, which almost certainly would diminish the entertainment value of the film, this headquarters could not recommend official support of this project.”

One of the army’s main concerns was that the original script presented a picture of the “old army” and did not reflect the realities of the “new army,” with its kinder and gentler drill instructors, who, in theory at least, are not allowed to cuss, demean, and haze new recruits like they did in the old days.

In the original script, the drill instructor, who would be played by Gregory Hines, was a foul-mouthed thug who verbally abused and threatened his recruits.

“The new army has new rules,” Marshall says. “The new army doesn’t allow cursing, so we had to compromise on that. It weakened Gregory’s character, because he couldn’t yell at the kids anymore.”

Major Georgi had found numerous “points of concern” and “areas of objection” about the original script. As he pointed out in a memo dated May 31, 1993, one of his main concerns was with the script’s portrayal of an unscrupulous and insensitive recruiting officer.

In the original script, the recruiting officer, Captain Daniels, is

described as “sleazy,” and is shown mocking the intelligence of one of DeVito’s students. While drinking at the officers’ club, Captain Daniels is introduced to DeVito by another officer, who tells DeVito: “Daniels here is the top recruiter in the Midwest. Show ’em a warm body and he’ll stick a uniform on ’em.”

As the three men proceed to get drunk, Captain Daniels learns that Roosevelt Dobbs, a young black recruit, is one of the students assigned to DeVito’s remedial English class.

“Now there’s a piece of recruiting art!” Captain Daniels tells DeVito in the original script. “Picked that kid up in a Burger King. Worst goddam neighborhood in the city! There he is sittin’ in a booth, just staring into space. [Imitating Dobbs’s blank expression.] So I take a chance. Sit down, start shooting the shit. Next thing you know, I whip out a brochure—just happen to flip to one of those beer halls in Munich, you know, German barmaids smilin’ at all the G.I.’s in uniform. [Snapping his fingers.] Dobbs signs on a dime. No questions asked. Boy that dumb? You’re just grateful he can sign his own name.”

The army, however, doesn’t like to see recruiters portrayed as “sleazy” salesmen, so that scene would have to be eliminated if the producers wanted the army’s cooperation—and it was. Indeed, the entire character of Captain Daniels was cut out of the film. And somewhere there’s an actor who didn’t get a job because of the pressure put on the filmmakers by the military.

But that wasn’t the only scene that the army wanted cut from the film. The army also objected to a scene in which the recruits’ drill instructor punches DeVito’s character in the face.

In the original script, DeVito’s character, named Bill, and the drill instructor get into an argument when Bill witnesses the drill instructor being particularly cruel to several of the recruits. When Bill objects, the original script states that “a fist from the D.I. to Bill’s jaw sends him sprawling.”

The original script says that Bill then “picks himself up, brushes himself off and looks down at his watch.” Bill then wisecracks: “Takes a licking, but keeps on ticking.”

The script then reads: “Bill looks up, showing no pain, and promptly gets decked again.”

The army, however, would not allow the producers to show a drill instructor beating up a civilian. That would have to go.



In his May 31, 1993, memo, Major Georgi wrote that the depiction of lack of control by drill sergeants was one of his “areas of objection.”

So when the scene was rewritten, the drill instructor no longer punches DeVito. Instead, when they get into their heated argument, they are restrained by several soldiers before their disagreement can come to blows.

“These were changes mandated by the army,” says Jim Burnstein, the film’s writer. “They said that the abusive behavior displayed by Drill Sgt. Cass will not be tolerated. Thus, his language towards the recruits is considerably softened. On page 70 of my final draft, Sgt. Cass punches Bill out. On page 84 of the revision, he has to be restrained. Now there’s a change that made Uncle Sam happy.”

Major Georgi had numerous other problems with the original script. There was too much foul language and he didn’t like the script’s portrayal of “military police as discourteous cops/guards.” Major Georgi also wrote in his memo that the basic premise of the film—teaching Shakespeare to recruits instead of the “three Rs”—was “farcical.”

Two days later, the film’s producer, Sara Colleton, wrote a letter to Major Georgi saying that she was willing to be flexible on many of the issues raised in his memo, but noted that she was adamant about keeping Shakespeare in the classroom.

“As to the portrayal of the drill instructor, MPs, recruiters, etc., we feel this is an area of flexibility,” she wrote. “The issue of the DI hitting a civilian is something that we are open to discuss.”

Then she explained to Major Georgi that the film was not really so much about Shakespeare as it was about a “visionary” commander who wants the very best for his soldiers.

“There is a key fundamental creative idea around which this story revolves that is dramatically crucial to us,” she told Major Georgi. “We propose that on this particular base there is a unique and visionary commanding officer, a colonel, who wants to give a chance to a group of provisional recruits. This colonel has the philosophy that the ideal man is soldier and scholar. He has gone to the Army Training and Doctrine Command and gotten permission so that it is part of their schedule. This visionary colonel concept is essential to us.

“Perhaps, unbeknownst to the colonel, our teacher is allowed to pick his own curriculum. He picks Shakespeare and perhaps when the colonel finds out, he is called on the carpet and must eloquently persuade the colonel that

the discipline of learning something as difficult as Shakespeare is a complement to the discipline they are learning on the field from the DI.”

Everything else, she said, was negotiable.

“We look forward to your input to creatively solve these problems,” she told the major, “because we feel that what ‘Renaissance Man’ has to say about the Army is highly positive, and as our lead character changes his mind [about the army], so too will our audience come to appreciate what a great experience this can be.”

And for the army, that’s the key test: when the audience walks out of the theater, they should be left thinking that maybe the army isn’t such a bad outfit to join after all.

But the producer’s sales pitch wasn’t over yet. Colleton and Penny Marshall would still have to go back to the Pentagon to sell Major Georgi’s bosses on the film.

Colleton and Marshall arrived at the Pentagon on June 6, 1993, for their meeting with the military brass that would decide the fate of their movie. It was literally, and figuratively, D-Day.

“I went with a knot in my stomach,” Colleton recalls. “We went prepared as if we were going to be fighting a case before the Supreme Court. We walked in and expected a pretty rough go of it.”

The meeting, however, turned into a love-fest.

“Penny Marshall can charm anyone,” Colleton says, recalling that the director and the chief of Army Public Affairs, Maj. Gen. Charles McClain, whose office they were meeting in, hit it off right from the start.

“He talked about how he loved Shakespeare and how it changed his life,” Colleton recalls.

The general and the movie director also shared a common interest in bullet art—American folk art made out of bullets or by shooting bullets into pieces of metal. Major General McClain had several pieces of bullet art in his office, and Marshall, who is an avid collector of American folk art, spoke quite passionately—in her famously nasal voice—about her love of the art form.

“They hit it off,” Colleton recalls. “It was hilarious.”

Indeed, they hit it off so well that Marshall and Colleton later decided to rename the fictional army base in their movie after him. In the original script, the base was called Fort Kent, but in the movie, it became Fort McClain.

By contrast, Major Georgi and Phil Strub, the dour head of the Pentagon's film office, were all business during the meeting with the filmmakers.

"Major Georgi," Colleton recalls, "was one of these guys who was born and bred in the military. He was taught that there was one way, the right way, and that was the army way."

After Marshall and McClain stopped chatting about Shakespeare and bullet art, Georgi and Strub told the producers that if they wanted the army's assistance, they would have to rewrite the script. It was as simple as that.

The army's notes from that meeting show that "a consensus was reached in several areas," and that "OCPA-LA [the Office of the Chief of Public Affairs in Los Angeles] will assist the production team in a final revision of the script."

For Marshall, the biggest compromise involved the final exam on the play *Hamlet* that DeVito gives his students. In the original script, if the students flunked his test, they would be washed out of the army. The army, however, said that the producers couldn't say that because there was no comparable test in the real-life army. So instead, the script was rewritten so that the students only thought they would be washed out if they flunked.

"The test thing made it hard," Marshall recalls. "There is no need to take the test, but take it anyway. That was a story flaw. That's where we had to compromise."

Marshall doesn't feel that she compromised her script too much in order to satisfy the military, but she seems to realize that it is not beneath the Pentagon to ask filmmakers to do just that. "I am sure there are scripts that they don't want made that put down the military," she says.

Jim Burnstein had written the original screenplay for *Renaissance Man*, but a new writer, Nat Mauldin, was brought in to make the changes requested by the army.

"Thankfully, the changes that were made to the script, I was not required to make," Burnstein says. "However, at the end of the day, I perfectly understand why the producers wanted to work with the military. I would have done the same thing."

Burnstein, who teaches screenwriting at the University of Michigan, based his script on his own actual experiences teaching English and Shakespeare to military personnel for nineteen years at Selfridge Air National

Guard base in Michigan. The characters depicted in his screenplay were based on real people, but they were too real for the army's liking.

"Here we are the Hollywood guys wanting authenticity," Burnstein recalls, "and it's like Alice in Wonderland, the military guys wanting things that are less authentic."

Burnstein fought the hardest to keep an element in his original screenplay that explained why the eight underachieving recruits were taking the remedial English course in the first place. In his original script, the eight recruits had "flunked" their Armed Services Vocational Aptitude Battery (ASVAB) tests and were being given remedial courses to keep them in the army.

The army, however, didn't like the idea of a movie showing it lowering the admissions bar to allow recruits who couldn't pass its basic intelligence test to stay in the army in the first place. But Burnstein says that during his years teaching English on a military base, he found that the army does, in fact, do just that.

"In the volunteer army, if the enlistment numbers are low, Washington can lower the ASVAB numbers," he says. "But the people at the Pentagon said, 'No, we do not accept that rationale.' And when they finally agreed to do the movie, they said, 'We'll give you the rationale.' What you see in the movie is what they suggested. It says something like the recruits are not focusing that well, and if you sharpen their mental skills it will sharpen their skills as a soldier. They said, 'It's like what you're saying, but it's not rooted in the fact that when the numbers are low, we lower the bar.' They flat out said they don't do that, but the people I dealt with said they'll let that bar slide. Everything I wrote I first vetted through military people, the guys I worked with nineteen years teaching English and Shakespeare to the military. In this case, I think they made it less realistic than more realistic. I had everything I wrote checked off by lifers. I thought my technical experts were as good as theirs, and they weren't politically motivated.

"So I wrote the army a letter and they said they would not allow us to say that. But in my experience, that's exactly what they do. The irony for me is that in getting the military seal of approval to make it more authentic, you make it less authentic."

The military's approval process, however, isn't about making movies more authentic, it's about creating positive images; it's about making the

military look better than it really is; it's about making the military more attractive to potential recruits, taxpayers, and Congress.

The rewriting of the script to meet the army's specifications had an unintended consequence: after the film was shot, the rewrite man who'd been hired by the producers wanted to share the screenwriting credit with Burnstein, the original writer. Burnstein, however, strenuously objected.

The dispute ended up in an arbitration before the Writers Guild of America, which has the last word on who gets writing credits on films and television shows. And for the only known time, the question of a script being rewritten to mollify the military became one of the issues in a WGA credit arbitration.

"I said in my arbitration that it didn't seem fair to me that the changes that were dictated, more or less, by the military to get the movie made, were being counted against me," Burnstein recalls. "I said, 'After ten years and eight drafts, am I really to be penalized for the deal made by the army and the producers so that it would be easier to produce my screenplay? If so, it feels like a catch-22. Those changes were mandated. They weren't creative changes. Somebody was going to have to make them. Whether it was me or somebody else, they were going to have to be made.'"

WGA officials say that the military's demands for a rewrite played no role in determining the film's final writing credits, but in the end, Burnstein won his arbitration anyway and received sole screenwriting credit on the film.

The movie, however, turned out to be a box office dud. It cost \$40 million to produce, but only made \$24 million at the U.S. box office. Even so, the army was happy with the final product.

In his "after-action" report, Major Georgi wrote: "With an average admission price of \$6, approximately 4 million Americans have been exposed to the film."

Here, his use of the words "exposed to the film" was not accidental. Indeed, that's the way the Pentagon, which religiously tracks the box office reports of all the movies it assists, sees its relationship to the moviegoing public. "Expose" them to enough military propaganda and they'll be more inclined to join up and support future increases in the Pentagon's budget.

31 May 93

"RENAISSANCE MAN"

Points of Concern/Areas of Objection

military General Lack of understanding/knowledge of the modern US

- Outdated, Hollywood vision of the Army
- Misrepresentation of the Army, personnel, mission

Portrayal of USA Recruiting Command

- Officers erroneously portrayed as recruiters
- Dishonest, "sleazy", amoral officer
- Inaccurate portrayal of recruiting practices
- Depiction of ineffective, inaccurate enlistment program that can't identify fraudulent enlistments, etc

Distortion of USA Basic Training

- AIT or unit training activities in Basic Training
- 'Supplemental' training programs in Basic
- Depiction of males and females training together is inaccurate and incorrect
- Depiction of lack of control by drill sergeants
- Arming (knives) of basic trainees
- Out of date latrine facilities
- Basic Training is limited to drill & ceremonies, soldiering, basic marksmanship, physical readiness, first aid - an introduction to military life only
- Enlistees who "flunk" the ASVAB are not admitted to the Army or basic training

Stereotyping of Military Personnel/Activities

- Abusive drill sergeants portrayed as uneducated oafs
- Officers in 'Happy Hour' setting is contrary to deemphasis on alcohol
- Senior commander's that are willing to ignore UCMJ
- Inaccurate portrayal of racial issues in Army
- MPs as discourteous cops/guards
- Run-down facilities (educ center/quarters)
- Basic trainees put through an unreasonable level of hazing

Maj. David Georgi's notes on *Renaissance Man*, May 31, 1993.

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Maj. David Georgi's notes on *Renaissance Man*, May 31, 1993 (*continued*).

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Language

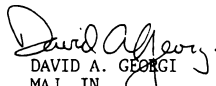
- Generally unacceptable
- Depiction of foul mouthed drill sergeants

Awards Presentation

- Unrealistic approach to presentation of MOH
- Constant violations of Privacy Act
- Cheapening of prestige of MOH

Misrepresentation of Army Programs

- ASVAB repair program unrealistic and unauthorized
- Unit sponsorship of 'discharge authorized' program is not feasible or believable
- Military cannot provide room & board to stateside civilian
- The sponsorship of a "Shakespeare" learning class in place of 3 Rs is farcical

  
DAVID A. GEORGI  
MAJ, IN  
DOD Project Officer

# ★ CHAPTER 10 ★

## “IT’S ALL IN THE NEGOTIATIONS”

### THE FILMS OF JERRY BRUCKHEIMER

**R**anger Specialist John Stebbins was a real-life army hero. He won the Silver Star—one of the military’s highest honors—for his bravery during the bloody battle of Mogadishu in Somalia in 1993. His heroics were sung in Mark Bowden’s best-selling book, *Black Hawk Down*, and his exploits were chronicled in Bowden’s original screenplay for the movie, which was later rewritten by Ken Nolan. But after Bowden’s book was published in 1999, and before the film went into production in March of 2001, something terrible happened to Stebbins: he was court-martialed and sentenced to serve thirty years in a military prison for raping a twelve-year-old boy.

The army likes to see its heroes portrayed on the silver screen—but not heroes who sodomize little boys. Something would have to be done about that. So the Pentagon asked the producers to change his name in the movie. And the producers agreed. After all, they needed the army’s helicopters to make the movie.

The film’s director, Ridley Scott, says he couldn’t have made the movie without the military’s assistance. “I’d have had to call it ‘Huey Down,’” he jokes.

The film’s producer, Jerry Bruckheimer, says he could have used computer-generated imaging to make the smaller Huey helicopters look like Black Hawks, but it would have been a lot more expensive. “We had a backup plan,” Bruckheimer says. “We had some Hueys in Germany that



we painted black and had to fly them over. We would have had to spend another million dollars to digitally alter them, but we would have made the picture.”

But it was much easier—and cheaper—to simply change a character’s name. So when the army asked them to take Stebbins’s name out of the movie, they did.

“We changed the name of John Stebbins,” Bowden recalls. “The army didn’t want us to use his name.” So in the movie, Ranger Specialist John Stebbins becomes Ranger Specialist Danny Grimes, who is played by actor Ewan McGregor.

Most of the other characters in the film are based on real-life soldiers whose real names were used in the film: soldiers like Ranger S.Sgt. Matt Eversmann, who was played by actor Josh Hartnett; Delta Sfc. Norm “Hoot” Hooten, who was played by Eric Bana; Delta Lt. Col. Danny McKnight, who was played by Tom Sizemore; Maj. Gen. William Garrison, played by Sam Shepard; Delta Sfc. Jeff Sanderson, played by William Fichtner; and Ranger Capt. Mike Steele, played by Jason Isaacs.

Two or three other real-life characters’ names were also changed, but that was done for security reasons. “They were changed because they were still active in Delta Force,” Bowden says.

But Stebbins’s name was changed for only one reason: the army didn’t want one of its heroes to be tarnished in the public’s mind by his real-life crimes.

“I think they thought it was unseemly to hold him up as this heroic figure, which he was in the battle, and then have him imprisoned for child molestation,” Bowden says. “I think they wanted his name changed instead of glorifying him in any way.”

But by insisting that the producers change the name of a real-life-hero-turned-child-rapist, the army violated its own rules, which are contained in *A Producer’s Guide to U.S. Army Cooperation with the Entertainment Industry*, published by the army’s Office of Public Affairs.

According to those guidelines, the army will provide assistance only to films that depict real people and real events if those people and events are portrayed in an “authentic” manner. The army manual states: “The production must be authentic in its portrayal of persons, places, actual military operations or historical events.”

Using Stebbins’s name in *Black Hawk Down* would have been

"authentic," but it also would have been embarrassing. So it had to be changed because the army is really less interested in authenticity than it is with positive images. And the filmmakers played along because they needed the military's cooperation. After all, who would have gone to see a movie called *Huey Down*?

The army gave the producers a whole laundry list of other changes that they wanted in the movie. Some of the changes they got, and some they didn't.

"I know the army had all kinds of concerns about [foul] language that were eventually ignored," Bowden recalls with a laugh.

But not all the army's requests were ignored. A scene in the script in which the Rangers shoot a wild boar from a helicopter was toned down at the army's request. In the original script, the Rangers are seen hunting a wild boar from a Black Hawk helicopter. They shoot the pig and then pick it up and take it back to camp and roast it. In the film, however, we don't see them actually shooting the pig. Instead, we see them spotting the pig from the helicopter, and then flash-forward to the camp where they are cooking it.

"The army initially objected to the pig scene being depicted at all," Bowden says. "Jerry was also concerned about that long before the Pentagon got involved. He felt that audiences would dislike the soldiers for shooting animals from the helicopters. But Ridley liked it and wanted it in the movie, and it ended up in the movie in a compromised version. It implies, rather than is shown."

*Black Hawk Down* was the fifth film Bruckheimer produced that involved military subjects, and he is well versed in the art of compromising with the Pentagon.

"It's all in the negotiations," Bruckheimer says. "You don't have to do it, but you don't get their assistance. If we feel it's hurting the integrity of the film, then we won't do it. And if they think it's going to hurt their image, then they won't do it. So there are certain ways to change things, to change wording that they'll feel comfortable with and you'll get what you want."

On *Black Hawk Down*, he says, "They went through the script and had some notes. We negotiated on some changes that we didn't want to do, and others we were fine with. There was a whole litany of things. Most of them were deal breakers." (*Deal breakers* and *show stoppers* are

terms the military uses when it threatens to withhold assistance unless producers make the requested script changes.)

Bruckheimer is the king of the modern, big-budget military movie. He's made three other films with the assistance of the military: *Top Gun*, *Armageddon*, and *Pearl Harbor*. And on every one, he changed the scripts to satisfy the Pentagon's demands.

On *Top Gun*, the producers received official navy approval to shoot part of the film on a naval base near San Diego, but they had to change the script to get the base commander's cooperation. In the original script, Tom Cruise's love-interest, played by Kelly McGillis, was an enlisted woman in the navy. The navy, however, forbids fraternization between officers and enlisted personnel.

"In the original script, she was in the military, but not an officer," Bruckheimer recalls. "But when we went to the base commander, he would not allow us to shoot there unless we changed the occupation of the female lead. So we changed her to an outside contractor. We changed her to like a Rand Corporation person who was evaluating [the pilots'] performance."

On *Pearl Harbor*, Bruckheimer agreed to change the script after the family of Lt. Col. Jimmy Doolittle, the World War II flyer who led the first raid on Tokyo, objected to the way he was portrayed in the film. In the original script, Jimmy Doolittle was depicted as a vulgar and foul-mouthed bully. "We made some changes based on Doolittle's granddaughter," Bruckheimer recalls.

"Doolittle was originally portrayed as an idiot, a vulgar and crude man," says military film historian Lawrence Suid. "And none of those things were true. The family complained bitterly and the Doolittle biographer complained bitterly. The DOD had already approved the project, but they [the filmmakers] changed the script anyway. They were concerned about how the veterans would react. The navy liaison was concerned because he wanted to avoid controversy."

Lt. Col. Bruce Gillman, director of the air force film office in Los Angeles, says: "All of the historians, including the Doolittle historian, met with Disney and I think that's why the character was changed to a more truthful depiction. The Doolittle family met with Disney before the filming of those scenes. A lot of the input from the Doolittle Raiders and the historian was put in. Every script that comes in gets worked on, and

this was no different. Disney did incorporate much of what people's concerns were."

Bruckheimer says that neither *Pearl Harbor* nor *Top Gun* could have been made without the military's assistance. "*Pearl Harbor* would have never been made without them," he says. "Nor would have *Top Gun*."

Bruckheimer also agreed to make numerous script changes the air force had requested on *Armageddon*, but drew the line at giving a military background to the oil rig worker played by Bruce Willis. A July 3, 1997, letter from an air force liaison officer to the producers of *Armageddon* said: "The incorporation of an Air Force-related 'back story' for [the Willis character] could provide us the incentive to recommend official support of this project." Bruckheimer, however, rejected the idea, and still got the air force's cooperation. "We didn't give it to them," he says. "I didn't like the idea. It wasn't right for the character. He was a rough guy, a rough neck. They got it. It's a negotiation. It was too good a movie and a script for them not to be involved."

Released by Disney in 1997, *Armageddon* tells the story of a group of oil industry roughnecks who are recruited by the military to intercept and destroy an Earth-threatening asteroid.

"The heroes of our story are the U.S. military, NASA technicians and oil industry civilians," Disney executive Philip Nemy said in a pitch letter to Phil Strub, head of the Pentagon's film office, asking for the military's assistance. "Already, we have the complete support of NASA and strong interest from the oil industry. We firmly believe that with the support of the U.S. military, 'Armageddon' will be the biggest film of 1998 while illustrating the expertise, leadership and heroism of the U.S. military. Our experience with you and the U.S. Army on the film 'In the Army Now' was extremely positive. I am looking forward to working with you on yet another exciting pro-military project."

"Pro-military" projects are Bruckheimer's specialty, and *Armageddon* got the support he wanted, but only after he agreed to make several script changes demanded by the military. An internal air force memo said: "Our association with the movie began in early April 1997 with a request by [Disney subsidiary] Touchstone asking for permission to tour various Air Force facilities as potential filming locations. Our review of the initial script resulted in several story meetings that led to the inclusion of a much greater Air Force presence in the film than was ini-

tially scripted. When the production company agreed to our story recommendations, we went forward and obtained DOD approval.”

But sometimes, even Bruckheimer can’t change a script enough to satisfy the military, as was the case in 1995 when he tried to get the navy to help him make *Crimson Tide*. The film, which starred Denzel Washington and Gene Hackman, depicted a mutiny aboard a nuclear submarine.

“They didn’t like the mutiny,” Bruckheimer says. “There was one admiral who killed it. He was head of the submarine fleet. I think everybody else down the line wanted to help, but this one admiral wouldn’t go for it.” Bruckheimer had to make do with a mock submarine, interspersed with film of a real sub that was photographed surreptitiously as it was leaving its base.

“We didn’t work on it because of the mutiny,” Strub says in an interview at his office in the Pentagon. “We couldn’t get past the mutiny.”

Strub, in a July 8, 1994, letter to an executive at Disney, said: “From our point of view, the fundamental premise of an armed mutiny, with its attendant depictions of the crewmembers’ behavior, decisions and performance, is unacceptably unrealistic. The submarine-based nuclear deterrence mission is predicated in large measure on the conviction that even during the gravest of crisis, the crew would behave rationally, reasonably and responsibly.”

Strub had read Clancy’s novel and knew full well that the navy would never support a movie about an armed mutiny aboard a nuclear sub. But he also liked the idea of another Clancy movie coming to the screen. After all, *The Hunt for Red October* had been a big hit at the box office and a big boost to the navy’s recruiting efforts. So he was hopeful that Bruckheimer could find a different way of presenting the conflict aboard the sub in such a way that the navy could support the film. Maybe, Strub thought, the armed conflict between the commanding officer, played by Hackman, and the executive officer, played by Washington, could be toned down enough so that the navy could get behind the film.

“If the production company and the studio were willing to be flexible on the creative content, there might be a middle ground on which all could agree,” U.S. Navy Cdr. Gary Shrout told Strub in a memo in April 1994.

The navy wanted the film’s screenwriter, Michael Schiffer, to tone down the mutiny scene in the book, which depicted an armed insurrection aboard the USS *Alabama*. In the book, the United States and the Soviet Union are brought to the brink of war when radical elements in the USSR take over a nuclear missile installation and start fueling the missiles for a possible launch against America. After receiving a legitimate national command authority message ordering the *Alabama* to launch its own nuclear missiles, the sub is attacked by a Russian submarine. During the attack, the *Alabama* receives another message relating to the launch of its missiles, but this message is interrupted, and radio contact is lost. Did the new, indecipherable message confirm the original orders to launch the *Alabama*’s missiles, or was it a new order to stop the launch?

These questions throw the ship’s crew into a quandary—and an armed mutiny—as half the sub’s crew line up behind the commanding officer (Hackman), who wants to launch the missiles, and the other half who side with the executive officer (Washington), who wants to stop the launch pending clarification of orders.

The navy, however, suggested an alternative that would eliminate the mutiny scene and allow the Pentagon to support the film, which would trim millions of dollars from the film’s budget.

“For example, if the XO [executive officer] requested a delay of the missile launch while the crew fixed the radios and the CO [commanding officer] continued to evade the Russian Akula [submarine], some friction and disagreement could be maintained between them,” Shrout told Strub in an internal memo. “The CO could give the XO a time deadline to meet in receiving the second message, otherwise the CO would continue the launch—using the legitimate, authenticated launch orders received aboard the *Alabama*. This would certainly change the nature of the film from an action film to a more intellectual thriller, but might open the door to Navy support.”

The navy didn’t like the idea of a movie showing a mutiny onboard a nuclear submarine, but there was an even bigger “show stopper” that would prevent Bruckheimer from receiving the navy’s cooperation on the film. And it wasn’t because of his depiction of a fictional mutiny, but rather, because of his depiction of a real-life scenario the navy didn’t want to see played out on film.

An internal navy memo, written to explain why the navy should not support *Crimson Tide*, notes that there are “two critical points that are regarded as ‘sacred’ by the Navy in any fictional depiction of fleet ballistic missile submarine operations.” One of these critical points states that “there can be nothing depicted that would lead the audience to believe that the ship is unsafe.”

The other critical point states: “The authorization for the release of nuclear weapons comes from the President. There can be no ambiguity about the order to fire or the procedures leading up to the firing of a nuclear weapon. There can be no characterization that it would be possible for the crew to fire a missile on their own initiative—or even attempt to try to fire a missile.”

But the script for *Crimson Tide* showed that submarine crews can, indeed, fire their nuclear missiles independent from any outside order, and that such an unauthorized launch is possible in the real world because the same checks and balances that would prevent a rogue B-52 crew from dropping an atom bomb on Russia do not apply to nuclear submarines and their deadly cargo of nuclear-tipped ballistic missiles.

“At its heart, this screenplay deals with the issue of PALs—Permissive Authorization Links—mechanical devices that prevent the launch of missiles except by a centrally located national command authority,” ShROUT told STRUB. “The Air Force has always disliked the idea that they had to have PALs while the Navy has not, due primarily to the difficulties in communicating with a deeply submerged submarine. This screenplay attempts to show that without PALs it is possible to inadvertently launch strategic nuclear weapons even with the national command authority recalling their authorization.”

ShROUT acknowledged that this is possible, although he derisively mocked its likelihood.

“Given the professionalism of the submarine force,” he told STRUB, “the probability of an inadvertent launch is less than getting kidnapped by Martians.”

One thing is perfectly clear, however. The Pentagon tried its damndest to get the producers of a major motion picture not to explore this possibility in a film that would be seen by millions of American and international moviegoers.

But Bruckheimer was in a stronger position at Paramount than producer Mace Neufeld had been a few years earlier when he was trying to get the navy's assistance for a submarine picture he was producing called *The Hunt for Red October*. That film, Neufeld says, would not have been made if the Pentagon had refused to cooperate.

But Paramount was willing to back Bruckheimer's *Crimson Tide* whether the navy cooperated or not, so he had the option of not acquiescing to the navy's demands. And the navy was well aware that Bruckheimer was playing a stronger hand.

"It is important to note that this film will be made—with us or without us," Shrout told Strub. "Disney's Hollywood Pictures and the production company do not need our support in order to make this film. This project has been put on the 'fast track' at Disney and is currently scheduled to start production in late June '94, and sets are currently under construction. This film will be a major motion picture with well-known actors involved. What the studio would obtain from Navy cooperation is an extra degree of realism through the use of authentic establishing shots not otherwise obtainable, an important shot of a Trident boat submerging in Hood Sound and active duty technical expertise."

Despite their unwillingness to assist the film unless the producers agreed to radically change the mutiny scene, Shrout felt that the film could still do a lot for the navy.

"The high artistic quality of this screenplay, and the very thorough research conducted by the script writer make it unfortunate that the Navy cannot support this script," he told Strub. "There is a sense in this script that a determined effort is being made to put the Navy in the most positive light possible. While not evidenced in the current script, virtually all of the entertainment industry personnel connected with this film have stated that they wanted to portray the conflict between the CO and the XO as that of a disagreement between two reasonable men."

In the end, Bruckheimer was not willing to make the kind of wholesale changes that the Pentagon wanted, and he ended up making *Crimson Tide*—at considerably greater expense—without the military's support. But he would not have had that option if Paramount had told him that he had to get the Pentagon's assistance in order to make the film, as the studio had insisted a few years earlier to producer Mace Neufeld during



the development of *The Hunt for Red October*. If that had been the case, Bruckheimer would have had to accede to the Pentagon's demands for major script changes or scrap the picture altogether.

Which raises the question: Should the Pentagon have that kind of control over whether or not a motion picture gets made?

# ★ CHAPTER 11 ★

## “SHOW STOPPERS”

The air force general carefully read the script for *Air Force One*, jotting down notes in the margins and occasionally writing “Show Stopper” in red pencil alongside bits of dialogue or scenes he wanted deleted. “Show stoppers” are producers’ biggest nightmares when dealing with the military—they are changes that must be made or negotiated before the producers can get access to the military hardware they want.

The producers of *Air Force One*, which starred Harrison Ford as the president of the United States engaged in hand-to-hand combat with terrorists who have hijacked the president’s jet, had to negotiate their way through a maze of “Show Stoppers” in 1995 before Phil Strub would finally provide the assistance they’d requested.

Strub’s main cause of concern was the script’s repeated references to “Delta Force”—the army’s highly classified Special Forces commandos. In his notes to the producers, Strub said repeatedly that the use of the term *Delta Force* was a “Show Stopper,” and insisted that all references in the script to *Delta Force* be changed to “refer to Special Forces generically.”

The producers agreed to make the change, and the term *Delta Force*, which appeared three times in the original script, does not appear anywhere in the actual film.

The air force also insisted on numerous other changes in the script that basically cut the army and the Marines out of the picture altogether.

As is often the case when one branch of the service is providing most or all of the hardware and military manpower for a film, that branch wants to get all the public relations and recruiting value it can get out of the film—to the exclusion of the other branches.

An air force memo discussing an early draft of the script said that numerous changes should be made in the script to give the air force the leading role in the film. The memo urged the producers to: "Change all references to Army Rangers to Air Force Special Tactics Team members; make Lt. Colonel Perkins [an Army officer] an Air Force officer; make Major Caldwell an Air Force officer; change 87th Mechanized Air Wing—that's Army terminology—make it the 89th Air Wing [an Air Force squadron]; change Marine guards to Air Force Security Police; delete Navy F-14s and any reference to the Navy. It makes the Air Force appear to be incompetent."

In the end, most of the script changes were made. The Pentagon was happy and the producers were happy, but the public never knew that the "Show Stoppers" had been deleted from the film.

DoD/JCS Comments on "Air Force One"  
August 22, 1995 script

Overall: The consensus is that we would like to be able to work on this picture. We have attached a sequential list of suggestions for increasing the accuracy and feasibility of the military portrayals. The show-stoppers are marked with an asterisk.

Page by page:

Pg 1, MC-130 HERCULES TURBO-PROP/STRIKE FORCE LEADER - the special forces team, while Army in actuality, would not be seen as service-specific. Here, and elsewhere, they should be depicted and referred to as "U.S. special forces." "special operations forces," etc. In this scene they would be equipped with oxygen masks, weapons, FF helmets, & ruck sacks. Signals would be given in a series of silent jump commands.

Pg 2, EXT FIELD - FYI, Stravanavitch would likely be given an injection to calm him down. Also, the Strike Force Leader would limit his transmission to one or two code words.

Pg 4, MARSHALL - "... in cooperation with the Russian Republican Army Spetsnaz ..."

Pg 5 & 14, change Marine guards to Air Force Security Police.

\*Pg 5, SPECIAL AGENT GIBBS - the bad guy/traitor can't be a Secret Service agent. Must be Chief of Staff or other White House appointee.

Department of Defense/Joint Chiefs of Staff comments on *Air Force One*, undated.

Department of Defense/Joint Chiefs of Staff comments (continued).

Pg 22, INT. CONFERENCE ROOM - SECDEF & CJCS would be on this conference as well (by phone)

Major Caldwell - change "Tomcats" to "F-16's" or "Fighting Falcons"

\*Pg 29, COCKPIT F-15 EAGLE, COL CARLTON - "Copy. Special Forces have been (chose one:) alerted or deployed or are on the way." Need to refer to generic "special forces," vice any particular unit.

Pg 33, INT. MISSION COMMUNICATIONS CENTER - need blasting cap to detonate C-4.

\*Pg 35, EXT. RAMSTEIN FIELD - although only in the scene description, need to refer generically to "special forces commandos"

Pg 37, INT. WHITE HOUSE SITUATION ROOM - General Northwood is "Chairman," not "head" of the Joint Chiefs; Thomas Lee, the DoD rep, would be the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Special Operations/Low Intensity Conflict. DoD can provide information about the White House situation room.

Pg 39, Col Carlton - Delete "Now shut up and escort."

Pg 43, Change "87th Mechanized Air Wing" to "89th Air Wing"

Pg 44, middle of page, Dean 3rd dialogue - change pilot's age to at least 24 or 25. 19 is far too young. Also, Dean 4th dialogue - change "soldier" to "Air Force Pilot."

Pg 56, 3rd Korshunov - change "soldiers" to "your forces" or "your military"

Pg 60, NATIONAL SECURITY AGENCY, LISTENING POST - Doesn't have to be a model, but why "grossly overweight?"

Pg 62, 2nd Bazylev - change "armies" to "military forces"

Pg 72, 2nd Mitchell - change "Flight Office" to "Air Force One"

Pg 76, Voice - change "87th Air" to "89th Wing"

\*Pg 83, INT. CONFERENCE ROOM - MARSHALL must refer to special forces generically.

Pg 86, EXT. MAIN CONFERENCE ROOM, and elsewhere - jump altitude and speed would be 13,000 feet and 130-140 knots.

Pg 88, EMERGENCY PARACHUTE LAUNCH RAMP - Major Caldwell, as the only individual with expertise, would be carefully showing the others how to put on/operate the chutes. He might also secure chem lights to their gear.

Pg 95, EXT. PARACHUTE LAUNCH RAMP - how did Zedeck survive the depressurization? Might want to establish him securing himself in earlier scene(s).

Pg 116, top of page, MARSHALL's comment about the pilot is extremely insensitive. Probably would simply say that the pilot and co-pilot are dead.

## Department of Defense/Joint Chiefs of Staff comments (continued).

Pg 120 and elsewhere, change Navy pilots & aircraft to Air Force F-15s or F-16s )from Incirlik Air Base in Turkey).

Pg 121, COL. CARLTON's conversation with the President would be liberally sprinkled with either "Mr. President," and/or "Sir."

Pg 122, and elsewhere, between General Northwood & General Greely - Northwood's going to call Greely by his first name. If Greely's also 4-star, he'll do the same. If he's not, he'll refer to Northwood as "Chairman" or "General."

EXT - NIGHT, and elsewhere - KC-10 would be an MC-130, in fact, especially since it's the same aircraft in which the special forces deployed earlier.

Pg 124, EXT. KC-10 (sic) and elsewhere - the special operations forces would not be service-identified. They would likely be wearing generic military flight suits, (& helmets equipped for communications), and should be referred to throughout as "U.S. Special Forces," "American Special Forces," "our forces," or "special operations forces," rather than "ranger," "soldier," or "airman."

## NOTES for USA/USAF:

1. Lt Col Perkins (presidential military aide): which branch of Military Service? Remember that on Pg 38, White House Situation Room, an "Air Force Colonel" military aide with football meets the VP *USAF*
2. Major Caldwell ("military advisor" aboard Air Force 1): which branch of Military Service? *USAF*
3. General Northwood (CJCS): which branch of Military Service? *Army*
4. President's EMERGENCY DEPLOYMENT POD - how will this sequence play out?

## FYI: USAF Depictions:

1. Pg 1 and elsewhere (including end of picture), MC-130 & crew
2. Pg 5 & elsewhere, Air Force One & crew (COL. DANIEL AXELROD, stewards, "Air Force Specialists," etc)
3. Pg 5 & Pg 14, security police at Air Force One
4. Pg 25 and elsewhere, Ramstein AFB & Controller
5. Pg 29 and elsewhere, COL. Carlton, "Fighter Pilot #1," the F-15s, etc.
6. Pg 43 & elsewhere, Ramstein AFB & General Charles Greely, "head of the 87th Mechanized Air Wing," (sic)
7. Pg 77 & elsewhere, "AFO's Maintenance Hanger (sic)/Andrews Air Force Base" and "Chief Mechanic"
8. Pg 89 and elsewhere, KC-135 & pilot

# ★ CHAPTER 12 ★

## SELF-CENSORSHIP IS STILL CENSORSHIP

A snowstorm had blown through Fort Chaffee, Arkansas, on the morning of March 2, 1995, and another was on the way. During a break in the weather, the film crew for *The Tuskegee Airmen* set out to scout locations on the heavily wooded military base. The roads were icy and wet, and as producer Bill Carraro and his crew made their way around a sharp bend in the road, they came upon an overturned army truck, steam rising from its hot undercarriage, its front wheels slowly spinning in the air. Two soldiers—a man and a woman—had been thrown clear and were standing dazed on the side of the road. The driver was pinned inside the crushed cab, suspended upside down by his seatbelt.

Carraro jumped out of his car and ran over to help the injured man. “The windshield had collapsed and the driver was trapped between the steering wheel and the ground,” Carraro recalls. “He was in a lot of pain. His legs were injured.”

Carraro sat the two dazed soldiers by the side of the road and radioed back to his base camp for help.

It had been raining on and off for days, and the film company had had to rent a crane and a bulldozer to pull its own trucks out of the red Arkansas mud when they got stuck axle-deep in the muck. So Carraro called his transportation captain, John Carpenter, and told him to bring the heavy equipment to the accident site.

“Our transportation guys came with the crane,” he recalls. “They

lashed heavy chains to the axle of the vehicle, and one of our drivers crawled inside the truck and cut the seatbelt. That kid was quite a hero. Then they used the crane to raise the vehicle several inches, and we pulled the driver out.”

By this time, the military had shown up and had called for a Medevac helicopter. Free from the wreckage, the injured driver was treated by the film company’s nurse, and when the chopper arrived, he was placed on a stretcher and put inside and flown to a local hospital.

“Ninety seconds after the helicopter took off, the worst snow blizzard ever came in,” Carraro recalls. “It was a white-out. If it had taken any longer to get the driver out, he would have had to have been driven out.”

The soldier survived, and the army hailed Carraro and his men as heroes, presenting them with certificates of appreciation. Carraro has the plaque hanging on the wall in his office.

The army, however, had almost refused to allow Carraro and his crew to shoot their movie on the old World War II-era military base. The army hadn’t liked the first draft of the script at all. There was too much racism in it; too much “black-white hatred.”

The film, which starred Laurence Fishburne, Cuba Gooding Jr., and Malcolm-Jamal Warner, was based on the true story of a group of black Army-Air Force pilots who overcame racism in the military to gain the right to fly and fight for their country during World War II. But the Pentagon doesn’t like films about racism in the military. They’d forced producer Cy Roth to take it out of *Air Strike* and they’d forced Warner Bros. to take it out of *Battle Cry*. So they would try to get Carraro to take it out of *The Tuskegee Airmen*—or at least to get him to tone it down a bit. And in large part, they succeeded.

Pentagon documents show that the filmmakers went back and forth several times with the army over what could and could not be portrayed in the script, which was changed to the army’s liking in one revision, then changed back to include “black-white hatred” in another, and then changed back again before it finally got approval from the military.

Carraro gave the script to the Pentagon in October of 1994. According to an army after-action report, “Many problems were found in the initial script to include historical errors as well as character depictions.”

A revised script was given to Phil Strub, the head of the Pentagon’s

film office, on December 19, and three days later, the army told Carraro of its concerns.

One of the army's main concerns was the script's portrayal of the general in charge of the segregated base where the black pilots were trained. In the original script, he was depicted as a racist, while a U.S. senator was portrayed as the black pilots' main benefactor.

The army, however, didn't want the general depicted as the bad guy. So after being told that this would be an obstacle to receiving cooperation from the army, Carraro wrote a letter, dated December 22, 1994, to Phil Strub at the Pentagon, in which he said: "It is our intention to reverse the characterization of General Stevenson and Senator Powell, making the senator the source of the bigotry. General Stevenson will be revealed as someone who is loyal to the efforts of the Tuskegee Airmen."

The Pentagon got a new version of the script a week later. The characterization of the general and the senator had now been reversed—the general was now the good guy and the senator was the racist. This version of the script, the army said in a January 4, 1995, memo, "doesn't appear to have any show stoppers."

Nine days later, on January 13, 1995, Strub authorized military assistance for the film based on the December 30 script, but three days later, a new script was prepared.

"The tone of the new version appeared to be a white versus black scenario," the army report said. "We met with Bill Carraro on Jan. 25 to express our concerns."

The army's new concern was a new baseball scene that had been written into the script. In this scene, the two teams—one white and one black—end up getting into a fight. That would have to go, the army said.

So DOD officials met with representatives of the production company on January 27, and as the army noted in its report, "they agreed to rewrite the fight at the baseball game, which was dropped from the televised production, and to tone down the white versus black depiction."

Three days after that meeting, however, "a new script was prepared that again had a white versus black hatred tone," according to the army report, which noted that Maj. Thomas McCollum, the army technical advisor assigned to the film, had "prepared a letter to Bill Carraro that in effect said that the DOD did not want to be associated with such a movie."



A few days later, yet another version of the script was prepared and presented to Major McCollum. According to the army report, "This version reverted back to the depiction in the [approved] Dec. 30 version and no problems with DOD assistance were found."

Finally, after numerous rewrites to satisfy the military, DOD assistance was granted, and principal photography on the film began at Fort Chaffee on February 14, 1995. And two weeks later, Carraro and his crew would rescue the soldier trapped in his overturned truck.

Production was completed on March 23, and on June 10 a private screening was held for Togo West, secretary of the army, and Maj. Gen. Charles W. McClain, the army's Chief of Public Affairs. "Both were extremely pleased with the movie," the army report said.

No doubt, the army would not have been as happy with the film had they not had a hand in shaping it.

Without the military's involvement, says Robert Markowitz, the film's director, "The film would have been darker and closer to what really happened."

This wasn't the first time that Markowitz had dealt with the military on a film project. Three years earlier, in 1992, he'd directed another HBO movie that involved the military—only this time the Pentagon not only refused to assist the production, they tried to stop it from being made.

The film was called *Afterburn*, which was based on a true story—one that had been featured on *60 Minutes*—about the widow of an air force F-16 fighter pilot who took on the military and one of the Pentagon's largest suppliers in an effort to find out why her husband's plane had crashed.

Capt. Theodore Harduvel, played in the film by Vincent Spano, was killed in 1982 when his plane crashed into the side of a mountain in South Korea during a training exercise. The air force said the crash was the result of "pilot error" caused by the dizzying side effects of an antibiotic he'd taken several days before his last flight. But his wife, Janet, who was played by Laura Dern in the movie, didn't believe it. Her husband, a top-rated F-16 instructor and a graduate of the elite Top Gun Fighter Weapons School, was one of the best fighter pilots in the air force.

She believed that the plane had malfunctioned, not her husband, so she filed a lawsuit against the jet's manufacturer, General Dynamics.

Her lawyers argued that the crash was actually caused because electrical wiring in the plane's instrument panel had frayed, causing a short circuit that knocked out its attitude indicator, which tells a pilot if he is right-side up, or upside down, or in a climb or in a dive.

During the course of the trial, it was revealed that the F-16 had a long history of such problems. Indeed, maintenance records showed that her husband's own plane, although practically brand-new, had experienced numerous problems with its electrical instruments which malfunctioned only when the plane was in the air. Other F-16s reported similar problems. Indeed, the air force's own records showed that from 1978 to 1982 there had been over 130 reports of chafing in electrical wiring that had caused problems for other F-16s.

At the end of the trial, the jury awarded her \$3.1 million in damages, but the verdict was overturned by an appellate court, which ruled that the military's own design specifications were to blame, not General Dynamic's workmanship. Janet Harduvel got nothing.

The script for *Afterburn* was based, in large part, on the court records, and at first it looked like the Pentagon would cooperate. But the script also alleged a cover-up by the air force and General Dynamics, and the Pentagon hates movies about cover-ups—even if they are true

"Initially, the air force said they would cooperate," Markowitz recalls. "But they looked at the script and started doing a tap dance, and they said there wouldn't be any cooperation. And then they did everything they could to stop it."

Markowitz needed F-16s for his film, so if the American air force wouldn't provide them, maybe the Israeli air force would. "We found some F-16s in Israel and they told us they would cooperate," Markowitz recalls. "But then they called us back and told us that they wouldn't. The U.S. military prevented us from filming F-16s that were stationed in Israel by communicating with them not to allow us to shoot there."

So Markowitz, who had started out as a documentary filmmaker and was used to making movies on low budgets, had to improvise.

"We ended up building an F-16 out of wood," he says. "We shot it on the ground and then used stock footage that we got, and out of that we were able to create the illusion."

The military, he added, wouldn't even sell him stock footage of an F-16.

By contrast, filmmakers who play ball with the military can get all the

F-16s they want. *Behind Enemy Lines*, a far-fetched 2001 action yarn that was very loosely based on the real-life shoot-down of F-16 pilot Scott O'Grady over Bosnia, got lots of military assistance. And the Pentagon didn't care how far that film strayed from the real-life story it was based on. It made the military look good, and that's all that mattered.

But films that are denied military assistance have to compete in the same marketplace as those that get the Pentagon's approval, putting them at a decided economic disadvantage. Their budgets are higher, their visual effects are not as good, and they have to sell more tickets to make a profit. So in effect, the Pentagon is subsidizing films that make the military look good. Some might call it a bribe.

Markowitz was no stranger to censorship and its insidious stepchild, self-censorship, which are even more blatant in some foreign countries.

His first brush with government-imposed self-censorship came in 1982, while he was directing a miniseries in Poland for CBS called *The Wall*, which told the story of the Jewish uprising against the Nazis in the Warsaw ghetto. The show was being coproduced with the Polish government, which was—and still is—very sensitive about the way Poles are portrayed in movies made about the Holocaust.

The Polish government, which was then ruled by the Communists, “agreed to do it, but reluctantly,” Markowitz says. Part of the deal, however, was that the Polish government got to approve the script and any script changes.

“In Poland, the script was part of the contract,” he says. “So if you changed anything, the contract is at risk.” Pausing for a moment, he adds: “The military would love to have that deal in this country.”

During the course of the production, Markowitz learned an interesting piece of history. He discovered that the Nazis had built a merry-go-round right outside the wall of the Jewish ghetto, and that Polish children played on it every day while the Jews starved just a few feet away.

“The purpose of the merry-go-round was to psychologically humiliate the Jews and make them feel more and more hopeless,” Markowitz says.

The director, who saw this as a perfect symbol of an uncaring world at play while the Jews were being murdered, decided that he had to have the merry-go-round in the film. But the Polish government said no. It

wasn't in the original script that they'd approved and it couldn't be added now.

But Markowitz was persistent, and after considerable haggling, they reached a compromise. Markowitz would change history just a little if they would let him have the merry-go-round in the film.

"They finally agreed," he recalls. "They would build it and put it there if I would agree to two things: [First,] I would not have a Polish child on the merry-go-round, and [second], that somewhere in the story it would be shown that there were good Poles who gave weapons to the Jews for their uprising. And in fact, a few had.

"So I had to decide which reality was more important. Did I want to say, 'Screw you,' or would I say that this ludicrous and torturous and perverted idea really happened, and to show it, I am going to have to compromise. And that's what I decided to do." In the end, Markowitz got his merry-go-round, but in the film, there are no Polish children riding it—only uniformed Nazi soldiers.

Markowitz had an even worse experience in the Philippines in 1987 when he was directing *A Dangerous Life*, the six-hour HBO miniseries about Cory Aquino's "People's Revolution" that only a few years earlier had resulted in the overthrow of dictator Ferdinand Marcos. He had gotten permission from the Philippine government to shoot the film there, but holdovers from the old Marcos regime did not want a movie made about their crimes. So they tried to stop him.

"Here we were making a film celebrating a successful revolution," Markowitz recalls. "Cory Aquino said she would cooperate, but during the first week of shooting, an injunction was taken out to stop the filming. Juan Enrile, who was head of the military under Marcos, wanted to become president and he hadn't given up hope. He did not want this miniseries to be made, so he stopped us and we were thrown out of the country. I had to go to Sri Lanka to film the Philippine part of the film. But in the course of the year, the injunction was finally lifted and we were able to go back to the Philippines and finish the film. It was all about censorship and control."

Clearly, the type of military meddling that helped shape *The Tuskegee Airmen* is not on the same order as the outright censorship that Markowitz

saw firsthand in the Philippines, but it's not that different from the self-censorship he had to agree to twenty years ago in Communist Poland.

"Censorship comes from lots of different places," Markowitz says, "and self-censorship is important because the more experience the filmmaker has, the more you are apt to self-censor because the more you are aware of the forces out there. It's not just the military, it's not just the government, it's not just the advertisers, and it's not just the tolerance of the public. It's a combination of all those things. The danger is that when you are experienced, all those voices tell you that all these things are possible obstacles. But when the military is involved, the obstacle is sitting right there in front of you. It's not hypothetical. It's real."

# ★ CHAPTER 13 ★

## THE FIRST AMENDMENT DOESN'T ALWAYS COME FIRST

In the fall of 2000, the producers of *Hearts in Atlantis* turned to Phil Strub for help after the army's public affairs office in Los Angeles rejected their request for assistance.

The producers had been looking up and down the East Coast for a good place to shoot a carnival scene for their movie. They wanted a sea-side cliff with a working lighthouse, but the only one they could find was the Cape Henry Lighthouse, the last manned lighthouse in America. Trouble is, it was located on a military base—at Fort Story, Virginia.

The producers asked the Coast Guard, which operated the lighthouse, and the army, which ran the base, if they could use the facility. All they would need, they said, was a few days to set up the carnival scene, a few days to shoot the scene, and a few days to tear down the carnival props.

The fort's commander didn't mind them using the site for a few days, but after reading the script, Kathleen Ross, the head of the army's film office in Los Angeles, told the producers that the army couldn't give them permission to shoot at Fort Story because there wasn't enough in the movie for the army—only a military burial scene for a dead Vietnam War hero—and nothing in it at all for the Coast Guard. The producers would have to find another location for their movie.

The Virginia Film Commissioner's Office, however, didn't want the producers to go elsewhere; they wanted the producers to shoot in Virginia, and spend their money in Virginia. So they appealed to Strub to intercede.

They pointed out that the lighthouse is a tourist attraction that's visited by more than seventy-eight thousand people every year. And besides, they noted, Fort Story hosts 135 major community events every year, including bike races, and, for the last twenty-five years, the Shamrock Marathon, whose finish line is right at the lighthouse. So why couldn't a movie company shoot there?

So Strub came up with an idea that would make everybody happy. Why not put an army recruiting booth in the carnival scene and show a few young men signing up? And to make it worthwhile to the Coast Guard, how about having a few uniformed Coasties walking around in the background?

Strub pitched the idea to the producers, who quickly agreed to his terms. The filmmakers would get their lighthouse; the army would get a little recruiting message placed in the film—in Hollywood, it's called "product placement"—and the producers would dress up a few extras as Coasties so that the Coast Guard would get a little free publicity as well.

So the producers got their writers to toss in a new scene that included the army recruiting booth, and after the Pentagon approved the scene, the film crew trekked down to Virginia to shoot.

The film, set in the 1960s during the Vietnam War, is based on the Stephen King novel about a little boy named Bobby who is befriended by a mysterious stranger, played by Anthony Hopkins, who comes to stay at his mother's boardinghouse. In the original script, Bobby and his friends, Carol and Sully, go to a carnival, where Bobby demonstrates some surprising talents. The new scene, which was shot on November 10, called for Sully to walk up to an army recruiting booth where he "watches people sign up."

"The production company filmed the carnival scene with a recruiting booth as part of the set dressing," Ross recalls. "The filming gave many army family members the opportunity to serve as extras and to be a part of a movie—something which contributed to the morale and well-being of those soldiers and their families because they saw it as a unique thrill."

Ross was not so thrilled, however, when the recruiting booth scene ended up on the cutting-room floor and was nowhere to be seen in the final film. "The army doesn't forget" is all Ross would say about that.

And the Coast Guard wasn't much happier. The producers had kept

their word and dressed up a few extras in Coast Guard uniforms for the carnival scene, but they are barely visible in the movie. All you can see is a few men in white uniforms walking around in the background. The uniforms are not identifiable as Coast Guard uniforms. They might as well be navy uniforms—or for that matter, Russian navy uniforms.

“We didn’t really ask for too much in that situation,” Coast Guard Cdr. Jeff Loftus says of the negotiations with the producers to have Coasties depicted in the film. “But still, you couldn’t tell they were Coast Guard in the background, which we did ask for.”

But does the military have the right to ask producers to place recruiting messages in their movies in return for access to military facilities that are otherwise open to the public?

“It’s outrageous,” says George Washington University law professor Jonathan Turley. “If the government routinely gives access to the public to particular areas, it cannot selectively exclude one group based on their viewpoint. The government cannot withhold access that is routinely given to the public or other groups in order to change an element of speech.”

Turley doubts that the Supreme Court would rule that the Pentagon doesn’t have the right to discriminate between film projects when it comes to providing them access to big-ticket items, such as aircraft carriers and nuclear submarines, but he believes content-based discrimination by the Pentagon raises important public policy issues that should be addressed by Congress.

“Where this belongs is in Congress,” he says. “Congress is the branch that is given the express responsibility to conduct oversight on military programs. This falls squarely under Congress’s oversight responsibilities.”





# ★ CHAPTER 14 ★

## APPROVAL DENIED

In 1992, the producers of *Citizen Cohn* were looking for some stock footage of an old atom bomb test to use in their movie. Their film for HBO would star James Woods as Roy Cohn, the infamous red-baiting aide to Senator Joseph McCarthy. Together, Cohn and McCarthy traumatized the nation during the 1950s with their wild allegations that the State Department and the army were full of Communist spies.

The producers wanted to use shots of a nuclear mushroom cloud at the beginning of their movie to establish the mood and anxiety of the era, so they contacted the Department of Defense to see if any stock footage was available.

Phil Strub, the head of the Pentagon's film office, told the producers they'd have to make their request through the army's film office in Los Angeles. The DOD, he told the producers, had hundreds of hours of unclassified footage of early atomic bomb tests, and that it could be made available to them if their script met the army's criteria for assistance. All the producers would have to show was that their film would promote the public's understanding of the military and help with army recruiting.

The producers sent the script to the army, but a few weeks later, they got the bad news. Their film did not qualify for assistance. They would have to find stock footage of an atom bomb blast somewhere else.

"It's common knowledge that they will only cooperate on things that they approve of," says Frank Pierson, the film's writer. "They were very

nervous about 'Citizen Cohn' because of the Army-McCarthy hearings. We asked for some film of an aboveground atomic blast in Nevada. We applied to the army and they refused to cooperate. We had to go to outside [film] libraries where we picked up enough stock footage to do the job."

But this wasn't the first time that Pentagon officials had refused to sell unclassified stock footage to producers of films whose subject matter they didn't like.

In 1964, Strub's predecessor, Don Baruch, refused to let the producers of *Fail Safe* have access to stock footage of U.S. warplanes they needed for their film. The film, which was one of the Pentagon's least favorite movies of all time, starred Henry Fonda as the president of the United States trying to recall American jets from a mission that a computer malfunction has sent them on to drop nuclear bombs on Russia.

The Pentagon, saying that such a scenario was virtually impossible, not only refused to give director Sidney Lumet access to stock footage in its files, but also tried to get commercial film libraries not to give him any footage of American bombers in flight. Lumet wanted to show a whole squadron of planes in the air, but in the end, he could only scrounge together about one hundred feet of film of a single airplane, a Convair B-58 Hustler, that he had to use over and over.

Jonathan Turley, a professor of constitutional law at George Washington University, believes that the denial of unclassified stock footage to filmmakers whose projects don't meet with the Pentagon's approval raises serious constitutional issues.

"Access to standard governmental footage has a significant affect on speech," he says. "The government can always argue that there are other ways of filming a war scene without actual access to an aircraft carrier. Hollywood is rather adept at creating such scenes. However, access to standard military footage constitutes a rather significant barrier and there is little countervailing governmental interest. The government can certainly argue that some forms of government assistance require a significant effort by the military—for example, access to an active aircraft carrier. But they can hardly make that case when there is a request for access to an area like the Presidio, or access to standard file footage of military equipment."

Numerous other films have been denied military assistance since Strub became the head of the Pentagon's film office in 1989.

*Mars Attacks*, the 1996 Warner Bros. film, was denied assistance because the military was depicted as being totally ineffective at combating Martian invaders. In the end, the aliens are defeated when a teenager and his grandmother discover that playing a loud recording of Slim Whitman's "Indian Love Call" makes the Martians' heads explode. After reading the script, Strub decided that he wanted no part of a film that portrayed the military as less effective at combating alien invaders than Slim Whitman.

Strub also had problems with *Outbreak*, which starred Dustin Hoffman as an army doctor trying to stop the spread of a highly contagious disease. Strub nixed Pentagon approval for the 1995 Warner Bros. film because it depicted the military as having started the epidemic through tests of a new biological weapon. "The DOD could not get behind the fact that this disease becomes an epidemic as a result of the military's interest in developing biowarfare," says Warner Bros. executive Lisa Rawlins.

*Space Cowboys* was another Warner Bros. film that couldn't get the Pentagon's approval because of its subject matter. The film, which was released in 2000, starred Clint Eastwood and Tommy Lee Jones as aging astronauts. "There was interest in having the support of the air force," Rawlins recalls. "They turned us down primarily because in the beginning of the story the space program was depicted as an air force program that was taken away and given to NASA. The air force did not feel that the depiction of the air force was in keeping with air force decorum." The air force was also unhappy with a scene at the beginning of the film that showed Eastwood and Jones as young test pilots crashing an experimental jet. "The air force did not think that that would have happened," Rawlins says. "That was the air force's perspective, and as a result, they withheld support. The air force didn't believe the recklessness of the pilots was an appropriate depiction."

Strub also turned down military assistance for the 1990 Warner Bros. film *Memphis Belle* because he didn't think it accurately portrayed the real-life heroics of the crew of the legendary World War II bomber.

*The General's Daughter*, meanwhile, was denied Pentagon assistance because it dealt with the fictional investigation of the death of an army

general's daughter who staged her own rape and murder on a military base. "That was dead on arrival," Strub says.

*Sergeant Bilko*, Universal's 1996 remake of the 1950s-era TV show, was denied military assistance because of the larcenous nature of the lead character and his zany band of sidekicks. "We didn't touch it because he was totally corrupt and so was everyone else," Strub recalls.

*Courage Under Fire*, the 1996 Fox film starring Denzel Washington as a military investigator looking into the combat death of helicopter pilot Meg Ryan, was denied DOD assistance because "there were no good soldiers except Denzel and her [Ryan]," Strub says. "The general was corrupt and the staff officer was a weenie." One of the film's producers, who requested anonymity, says: "The military is not in the movie business. They're in the protection business. They're in the recruitment business. They're in the business of promoting their own image. So there is no incentive for them to participate in a movie that from their perspective does not make them look good, or which in any way contributes to a controversial image in the marketplace."

*Lone Star*, the 1996 film from Columbia Pictures, involved an investigation into the decades-old murder of a small-town Texas sheriff. Part of the film was set on an army base, but when John Sayles, the film's director, asked the army for the use of some military uniforms, he was told that he could have them if he was willing to make some script changes in return. Sayles refused, saying that he wouldn't allow anyone to interfere with his creativity. So he had his costume department make up some army uniforms and he kept his script intact.

*Broken Arrow*, the 1995 Fox film that starred John Travolta as an air force pilot plotting to steal a nuclear weapon, didn't receive military assistance, either. The air force, however, consulted with the producers and got the filmmakers to agree to play down the villain's association with the military by having him take off his flight suit after stealing the bomb, while the film's hero, an air force pilot played by Christian Slater, keeps his flight suit on throughout most of the film.

Sometimes producers who need military equipment don't even bother to ask the Pentagon for help because they know Strub won't approve their script. That was the case in 1998 when HBO set out to produce *The Pentagon Wars*, which depicted the Pentagon's real-life cover-up of the deficiencies in the design and production of the Bradley Fighting Vehicle.

“We did not ask for cooperation from the army and we knew from the get-go that we were not going to get cooperation because [the film] doesn’t show the army and its bureaucracy at their best,” says an executive on the film who requested anonymity. “It’s no surprise that if you show them in a negative light, they’re not going to be cooperative. In some ways, the army is a business, as well. If they think it will help their recruitment or show them in a positive light, they can be helpful.” In the end, the filmmakers had to make their own Bradley Fighting Vehicle out of an old Russian tank. “We studied the blue prints and it was the same configuration as a Russian T-72 tank, and we bought one in California,” says Howard Meltzer, the film’s producer. “We cut off the top of the tank and built the rest. It’s amazing the hoops we had to jump through to get the things we needed because we could not get [the] military to cooperate.”

A partial list of other films that couldn’t get Strub’s approval because of their story lines include:

*Afterburn*, HBO, 1992

*Come See the Paradise*, 20th Century Fox, 1990

*Countermeasures*, 1993, an unproduced feature film

*Crimson Tide*, Disney, 1995

*Die Hard 2*, 20th Century Fox, 1990

*Down Periscope*, Fox, 1996

*Evolution*, DreamWorks, 2001

*Fields of Fire*, 1993, an unproduced feature film

*For the Boys*, 20th Century Fox, 1991

*Forrest Gump*, Universal, 1995

*GI Jane*, Disney, 1997

*Independence Day*, Fox, 1996

*Interceptor*, HBO, 1992

*Iron Eagle III*, TriStar, 1992

*Love Field*, Orion, 1992

*Major Payne*, Universal, 1995

*Midnight Clear*, 1992

*The Night of the Living Dead*, Columbia’s 1990 remake

*Pandora’s Clock*, 1995 ABC miniseries

*The Peacemaker*, DreamWorks, 1997

*Point Break*, Fox, 1991

*Point of Impact*, Universal, 1993

*Speed*, Fox, 1994

*Starship Troopers*, TriStar, 1996

*The Thin Red Line*, Sony, 1998

*Thirteen Days*, New Line, 2000

*Turbulence*, Rysher Entertainment, 1997

All these films—and many more—were denied Pentagon assistance for one reason or another, usually because Strub or someone else in the Pentagon didn't like the subject matter. And there is no appellate process within the military for these filmmakers to challenge the Pentagon's decision. A few filmmakers have tried to go over the Pentagon's head by going to the commander in chief, but in each of those cases the outcome was the same.

In 1981, the producers of *An Officer and a Gentleman* appealed to the Reagan White House in an effort to get the navy to help them. Reagan, however, did nothing.

Three years earlier, director Francis Ford Coppola appealed to Pres. Jimmy Carter to try to get the army to change its mind and help him make *Apocalypse Now*, but Carter didn't help him, either.

And in 1954, producer Cy Roth begged Pres. Dwight D. Eisenhower to intercede and get the Pentagon to help him make *Air Strike* the way he wanted to make it. But Eisenhower did nothing to help. In fact, DOD documents reveal that when the Pentagon found out that Roth had complained to the president, they told the FBI to investigate him to see if he was a Communist.

Clearly the checks and balances so common in the oversight of other American institutions are completely missing in the military's film approval process. The military can change its own rules on the whim of an admiral or a general and there is no avenue of appeal. And no one has ever challenged the Pentagon in the courts, and no filmmaker probably ever will because in Hollywood the fear of being blackballed by the military is a grim reality. Many filmmakers even fear that if they go to the newspapers with their complaints about being denied military assistance on their current film project, they won't stand a chance of getting military assistance on their next one.

# ★ CHAPTER 15 ★

## “DISHONEST PROPAGANDA”

In 1987, the script for a CBS television movie made its way all the way up the Pentagon chain of command to the desk of James Webb, secretary of the navy. The producers wanted the navy’s cooperation—ships and planes and personnel—to help make their movie, but this one was going to be controversial. So the guys in public affairs, who usually deal with these movie requests, figured that the secretary should have a look at it. The story was about a real-life navy admiral who had ordered the use of Agent Orange—a chemical defoliant—in Vietnam back in the 1960s that ended up killing the admiral’s own son. It was based on a true story.

“The navy public affairs people got nervous about this and brought it to me,” Webb recalls. “I had to take a position.”

The script, called *My Father, My Son*, was based on a book that had been coauthored by retired Navy Adm. Elmo Zumwalt and his son, Elmo Zumwalt III. The story involved one of the supreme ironies of the Vietnam War: while serving as commander of naval forces in Vietnam from 1968 to 1970, Admiral Zumwalt ordered Agent Orange to be sprayed along the banks of the Mekong River in an attempt to reduce the cover for enemy snipers. One of the navy boats that was patrolling the river was commanded by the admiral’s son, who was exposed to massive amounts of the defoliant.

After the war, the younger Zumwalt became a lawyer, but in 1983, he was diagnosed with lymphoma, a cancer of the lymphatic system, and two



years later he was found to have Hodgkin's disease, a cancer of the lymph nodes. The book he coauthored with his father told of his battle with cancer, and of how both father and son believed the cancer—and the cancers of thousands of other Vietnam vets—had been caused by Agent Orange.

So now James Webb, secretary of the navy, was being asked to decide whether the navy should support this film project. Ironically, Webb knew the younger Zumwalt, and he also knew something about the health effects of Agent Orange. Ten years earlier, he'd served as counsel to the House Committee on Veterans Affairs, which held three scientific hearings to determine whether or not Agent Orange caused cancer. Their conclusion was that Agent Orange was not a carcinogen. That finding would later prove to be wrong, but it would sink any hope the filmmakers would have for receiving navy assistance.

"There was no conclusive linkage between defoliation and the kind of cancer he had," Webb recalls. "So I said it would be inappropriate for the government to give its blessings to a film whose conclusions were not along the lines of the scientific evidence of the time. So we declined to support the film."

"I got no military assistance whatsoever," recalls Fred Weintraub, the film's producer. "The navy was vehement. They said Agent Orange didn't cause cancer. But the movie was right."

Weintraub estimates that the lack of military cooperation cost him an additional \$50,000 to \$1000,000, which was a lot of money back then for a low-budget movie. "The Vietnam riverboats were the hardest to replace," he recalls. "We had to create our own."

But it was probably worth the extra cost. Weintraub would have had to change the script beyond recognition in order to get the navy's cooperation—something he never even considered doing.

*My Father, My Son*, which starred Karl Malden as Admiral Zumwalt and Keith Carradine as his son, aired on CBS on May 2, 1988. Three months later, Elmo Zumwalt III died of the cancer that he and his father believed had been caused by Agent Orange.

After his son's death, Admiral Zumwalt, who before his retirement in 1974 had been the highest-ranking officer in the navy, continued his crusade to get the government to recognize that thousands of other Vietnam veterans' cancers had been caused by Agent Orange. In 1991, Congress passed legislation mandating the National Academy of Sciences' Institute

of Medicine to issue reports every two years on the health effects of Agent Orange. Those reports would later find “convincing evidence” linking exposure to Agent Orange to Hodgkin’s lymphoma—the same type of cancer that killed Elmo Zumwalt III. Today, the Veterans Administration provides full medical benefits to the Vietnam vets still suffering from cancers caused by exposure to Agent Orange—the very same cancers that Webb and the Pentagon said were not linked to Agent Orange back in 1987 when they declined to assist in the production of the Zumwalts’ story.

James Webb, who had served with the Marines in Vietnam as a rifle platoon and company commander in the late 1960s, and who had won just about every important medal the military hands out—the Navy Cross, the Silver Star, two Bronze Stars, and two Purple Hearts—wouldn’t last long as secretary of the navy. In February 1988, after less than a year on the job, he resigned in protest after refusing to implement congressionally mandated reductions in the navy’s force structure. Webb, however, had already found a new career as an author.

His first book, published in 1978, was called *Fields of Fire*, and it was based on many of his own wartime experiences. It touched on some awful truths about the war. It showed Marines smoking pot. It showed Marines executing a Viet Cong prisoner. It showed a Marine killing, or “fragging,” one of his own noncommissioned officers. But the novel was anything but an anti-Vietnam War book. First and foremost, it was pro-marine—an ode to the valor and heroism of the Marines who fought and died in Vietnam.

And the Marines loved it. They loved it so much, in fact, that in 1984 Maj. Fred Peck, the director of the Marine Corps’ public affairs office in Los Angeles, took the highly unusual step of actually pitching the book to Walt Disney Productions in the hope that they would make a movie of it.

“There’s a generation of young Americans out there—coincidentally, now of prime movie-going age—that knows very little about Viet Nam,” Peck said in a letter to Disney executive Pamela Williamson. “I think they’re naturally curious about the war and would flock to see a decent treatment of it.

“Webb’s book is a beautiful vehicle to describe that period in America’s history. The character development and conflict Webb uses to

tell the story—would enable an audience to understand and identify with people placed in jeopardy in Viet Nam. The range of Webb's characters is such that the ambiguity of our involvement in Viet Nam is vividly portrayed. Well, as you can see, I'm really high on 'Fields of Fire.' It's a compelling story that would make a great motion picture."

Disney passed, but by 1993, Webb, undaunted, had written a screenplay, and more importantly, he'd found financing. Now all he needed was the Pentagon's final approval.

But there was a problem. The script too accurately depicted the realities of the Vietnam War to satisfy many of the bureaucrats in the Defense Department's film office, whose only job is to try to ensure that movies portray the military in a positive light. And backroom Pentagon politics and personal animus were also working against Webb, who had made a lot of enemies in the Navy Department.

Even so, Webb thought he had a good chance of getting the Pentagon's support. After all, his book was mandatory reading in the Marine Corps, he was a decorated war hero, he had been assistant secretary of defense, and he was a former secretary of the navy.

But R. Adm. Kendell Pease, the head of the Navy Department's office of information, didn't like Webb and he didn't like his screenplay. And neither did Phil Strub, head of the Pentagon's film office.

"The Department of Defense hereby declines to assist in the production of the feature motion picture 'Fields of Fire,'" Strub said in a December 15, 1993, letter to Webb. "The story is a gripping depiction of Marines fighting under horrific combat conditions during the war in Vietnam. We understand that to portray these circumstances as realistically as possible, it's necessary to dramatize both the good and the bad in human nature that the war brought out among the combatants.

"The Marines, under extreme pressure and frustration caused by the deadly and confusing nature of the war, react by committing egregious acts such as fragging (page 59), using illegal drugs (page 94 and elsewhere), executing suspected Viet Cong (page 94) and burning a villager's 'hootch' (page 80). Our concern is that these kinds of frequent, seemingly commonplace acts will obscure the acts of bravery and dedication that the Marines displayed throughout the war in Vietnam.

"That these kinds of criminal activities actually took place is a matter of record. But by providing official support to the film, the Marines and

the Department of Defense would be tacitly accepting them as everyday, yet regrettable, aspects of combat.”

Webb was furious. His reply to Strub, which was full of scorn and sarcasm, even used the “P” word, accusing the Department of Defense of supporting nothing but “dishonest propaganda”—as if there is any other kind.

“It should not surprise you,” Webb said in his letter to Strub, “that I take deep exception to your characterization of the script, particularly your conclusion with respect to certain negative but historically accurate events that ‘these seemingly commonplace acts will obscure the acts of bravery and dedication that the Marines displayed throughout the war in Vietnam.’ The very reason I wrote the novel and am working on the film project is that this obscurity has been ongoing since the late 1960s, and needs to be reversed. But it can only be reversed by an honest depiction of events that juxtaposes such acts alongside the heroism and dedication that took place every day. I believe I made that distinction successfully in the novel, and I believe I am doing that in the film. It appears that what you are really saying is that when it comes to Vietnam, DOD will support only sterile documentaries, or feature films that amount to nothing more than dishonest propaganda.”

Webb was no newcomer to censorship. Back in 1981, the superintendent of the Naval Academy, from which Webb had graduated, tried to ban his second novel, *Sense of Honor*, which was set at Annapolis. “The superintendent took issue with it, saying it was vulgar and unrepresentative,” Webb recalls. “He tried to ban the book. He announced that they would not sell the book on the grounds of the Naval Academy. But when the *New York Times* called him, he backed off.”

Strub’s letter reminded Webb of that.

“The logic in your letter reminds me of when the Naval Academy attempted to ban my novel ‘A Sense of Honor,’” he told Strub. “It also reminds me of when the Navy refused to assist in the production of ‘An Officer and a Gentleman’—only Pat Coulter, then the Marine Corps liaison to Hollywood, realized that the project would help, not hurt, the overall image of the armed forces. A larger mind would militarily realize not only the potential of ‘Fields,’ but the guarantee inherent in my participation. I am also mindful that the Marine Corps itself pushed very hard throughout the late 1970s and the 1980s to see ‘Fields of Fire’ made into a feature film, as did numerous Marines both in and out of government.

The book has been mandatory reading in the Marine Corps for years, and is the most frequently cited piece of American literature in college courses on the Vietnam war. Furthermore, the Commandant personally expressed his support for the project in two separate meetings, and in two letters, indicating that the 'Corps would be **eager** to support' the project. One wonders what has changed to make it now unacceptable in the eyes of certain people in the Department of Defense, or perhaps the Navy."

What had changed is that Webb had fallen out of favor with some of the navy's top admirals. His fall from grace began on October 6, 1992—only a few months before he requested Pentagon assistance for his film project—when he wrote a column for the *New York Times* about the 1991 Tailhook sexual harassment scandal that rocked the navy.

Webb charged that the navy's "botched investigation" of the incident "threatens to swamp the entire naval service." And he was particularly critical of Acting Navy Secretary Sean O'Keefe's handling of the affair.

"I had been a strong critic of the leadership of the navy," Webb recalls, "particularly on the issue of the admirals not having the courage to stand up and defend their people after the Tailhook controversy."

The navy didn't care much for his comments, and Admiral Pease, the head of the navy office of public information—who would soon be reviewing Webb's screenplay—let him know it.

"There was a lot of bad blood between navy and me," Webb recalls. "Pease was one of my greatest critics on the issue of my criticism of the navy. Personalities were at play. I have no doubt that it played into pressures on the Department of Defense approval process at the time."

A year after Webb's editorial appeared in the *New York Times*, Pease killed any hope Webb had of receiving navy support for his film project.

"Full and unlimited support should not be approved for this production at this time," Pease wrote in a memo to Phil Strub.

But Webb didn't give up. He got Acting Commandant of the Marine Corps Walt Boomer—who was already on record as wanting to support the film—to write a letter to the DOD asking Strub to reconsider.

"While certain portions of [Webb's] screenplay contained unflattering portrayals of some Marines, we felt that it was a vivid and historically accurate account of the extraordinary adverse circumstances under which infantry Marines fought in Vietnam, and we interposed no objections to

DOD support,” Boomer wrote. “Subsequently, your special assistant [Strub] declined assistance based on an assertion that support of the project would be tantamount to the Department of Defense acceptance of the criminal acts of some of the characters.

“Having given the matter careful consideration, I request that you re-evaluate the Department’s position on supporting this production. The novel *Fields of Fire* has been on the Commandant’s reading list for professional military education for several years and is generally acknowledged by Marine Vietnam veterans as the most genuine fictional account of the war. I’m convinced that James Webb, who fought gallantly as a Marine officer in Vietnam and was severely wounded, is committed to producing a motion picture that is a fair and authentic, if unvarnished, portrayal of Marines who served in that conflict.

“Because the Vietnam War is a dark chapter in our nation’s history that many Americans would just as soon forget, the valor and sacrifice of those who fought there have been obscured by popular culture. The Department of Defense, by supporting the film, would aid Mr. Webb in producing the most faithful cinematic portrayal to date of those heroic veterans. It is not a pretty story, but it is one that needs to be told.”

Strub, however, didn’t think it needed to be told with the Pentagon’s blessings. In his reply to Boomer, he said: “Our decision whether or not to authorize military assistance is based partly on the accuracy and authenticity of the people and events depicted. But the principal requirement of the script is that it benefit recruiting, retention and the public’s understanding of the military. In the script ‘Fields of Fire,’ Marines commit grievous wrongdoings: fragging, substance abuse, executing Viet Cong and burning a villager’s home. These acts are depicted as commonplace and nearly all go unreported. None result in judicial action.

“The majority of viewers will not bring to the theater your or Mr. Webb’s experience, perspective and background. The audience, with little or no knowledge of the military or the Vietnam War, is very likely to conclude not only that these tragic events occurred routinely, but also that they represent the typical behavior of our military forces when placed under the duress of combat. For many viewers, this unfortunate opinion would be significantly reinforced by the knowledge that the film received official DOD support.

“Therefore, I do not believe that the script adequately meets the cri-

teria for support. The only other avenue to military production assistance lies in granting an exception to DOD policy. This I do not intend to pursue. Although I recognize the valorous acts, the bravery and the loyalty that are also portrayed in the script, these do not sufficiently outweigh the negative factors associated with the film.”

And that was that. Webb did not receive the DOD assistance, and his film project sat on the shelf for eight years. But he still didn’t give up. In October 2000 he signed a deal with RKO to finance the movie, with Webb to produce the film based on his own new screenplay. And in July 2002 he announced that RKO had signed two-time Oscar-winning cinematographer Janusz Kaminski to direct. And even though Strub still heads up the Pentagon’s film office, Webb says that he fully expects the DOD to approve the script this time around.

“I don’t imagine that I will have any problem with DOD support on the film,” he says.

Webb says that he has made changes to the script, including changes to elements that Strub had previously found objectionable. But he insists that those changes had nothing to do with Strub’s earlier rejection. “Art should not submit to politics on any important issue,” he says.

“The film we have now is different,” he says. “Times have changed. The screenplay now focuses on what was happening here, at home, as well. What I’ve done in this effort is tell a story that mirrors back on America at the time.”

But the objectionable “fragging” scene—in which a Marine murders a noncommissioned officer while under attack by the enemy—is now out of the movie.

“There’s no fragging,” he says.

And he may leave out the pot smoking and the burning of a villager’s “hootch,” as well. Asked about those elements of the script that Strub and the Pentagon found so objectionable back in 1993, Webb says: “Pot smoking? I don’t know yet. I don’t want to comment. The hootch? I don’t know. I’m not responding to what Phil Strub said ten years ago.”

Clearly, an honorable man like Webb has to be taken at his word—that he did not change the script to please Strub and the Pentagon. But when a screenwriter knows that the military is looking over his shoulder, who’s to say that self-censorship doesn’t sometimes creep into the picture?

# ★ CHAPTER 16 ★

## SANITIZING *JAG*

Shortly after the United States launched its war in Afghanistan, Marine Corps Sgt. Mike Hjelmstad pumped eight rounds from his 9mm Beretta into Osama bin Laden's face. Sure, it was only target practice. Sergeant Hjelmstad had blasted the terrorist's mug, printed on a paper bull's eye, at a firing range. But Hjelmstad, a tough Marine who once worked in the private sector as a bodyguard for actors Tom Cruise and Will Smith, would have killed Osama just the same, if given the chance.

"Just get me close," he says.

But Sergeant Hjelmstad is far from the front lines. He works at the Marine Corps' public affairs office in Westwood, California. After shooting Osama a few more times in the face at thirty yards, he took the bullet-riddled target back to his office and hung it up on the wall.

Ironically, a few years earlier, the sergeant's boss, Capt. Matt Morgan, had told the producers of *JAG*, the popular CBS melodrama about the navy and Marine Corps' criminal justice division, to delete the mention of an identical target-shooting scene from one of its scripts about terrorism. And the show's producers, who are heavily dependent on Marine Corps assistance, complied without a fight.

In 1998, the producers of *JAG* were working on an episode called "Act of Terror," an eerily prescient story about Arab terrorists who take a small boat out to an American warship anchored in the Persian Gulf and



blow a hole in its hull with a bomb. The episode aired on October 27, 1998—two years before seventeen sailors were killed when terrorists attacked the USS *Cole* while it was docked at the port of Yemen.

Osama bin Laden hadn't yet achieved the infamy that would come after the September 11 attacks on the Twin Towers and the Pentagon, but he was still widely believed to have been behind several other well-known acts of terrorism, including the August 7, 1998, attacks on the U.S. embassies in Kenya and Tanzania, and the bombing of the Khobar Towers in Saudi Arabia.

In the original *JAG* script for "Act of Terror," a group of Marines from the elite Fleet Antiterrorism Security Team (FAST) is seen conducting small arms training, firing 9mm handguns at cardboard targets. The script, which calls for a close-up view of the targets, says: "The bullet-riddled figure on the targets looks a lot like Osama bin Laden."

The Marine Corps, however, objected to the use of Osama's image for target practice, telling the producers that if they didn't change the scene, the Marines wouldn't loan them the men and equipment they needed to film the episode.

In a memo to the producers, dated September 9, 1998, Captain Morgan wrote: "Gentlemen, here are the USMC notes on 'Act of Terror.' Most are tech/tactical comments to accurately portray FAST Marines. A number of these, however, are changes that need to be made to get us to a point where DOD/USMC assistance is possible."

Morgan, who left the Marines' film office in July of 2002 and was promoted to major when he became head of public affairs for the newly formed Fourth Expeditionary Brigade, the Marine Corps' new antiterrorism unit, wrote a letter to the producers saying that "using the image of Osama bin Laden makes these Marines look like assassins. I would prefer they be shooting at alternative targets."

The producers, who had asked the Pentagon to provide a CH-46 helicopter and the crew to fly it for the episode, went to work with the writer to make sure that the changes demanded by the Marines would be incorporated into the script.

An internal Marine Corps document says that Phil Strub, the Pentagon's chief liaison to the film and TV industry, "seems willing to grant Department of Defense assistance approval based on current script changes in progress."

In the end, the producers eliminated the offending Osama bin Laden target-shooting scene, and they got the helicopter they wanted. The final shooting script for “Act of Terror,” dated, ironically, September 11, 1998—three years to the day before bin Laden’s terrorist attack on the Twin Towers and the Pentagon—describes the targets only as “bullet-riddled silhouette targets.” Osama’s visage has been eliminated from the scene.

“We pretty much said that firing at Osama look-alikes is not an important story point, and that if the Marines feel strongly that they want to be politically correct on this point, we would go along with them,” says Larry Moskowitz, the writer of the “Act of Terror” episode. “But I never felt it was censorship. I suppose you could make a case that it amounted to censorship because they used leverage to influence sections of the script that they might find objectionable. But the reason I say it’s not censorship is that the Marines and the navy both were always willing to negotiate the points that they found objectionable.”

But this raises an important question: Should screenwriters and producers be negotiating with the military about the content of movies? Freedom of speech, after all, is not just a constitutional right granted to the speaker. The listener also has the right to hear uncensored speech. Most viewers, however, have no idea that the government has any say whatsoever in the content of films and TV shows. Imagine the uproar and outrage if it were discovered that writers and publishers were regularly submitting novels and nonfiction books to the Pentagon for approval, and that they were negotiating changes in their content to suit the military’s sense of history and good taste. There would be hell to pay.

Pentagon officials argue that by working with screenwriters and producers they are only helping Hollywood to more accurately portray military life. But what the deleted target-shooting scene in *JAG* shows clearly is that accuracy is not nearly as important as positive portrayals of the military—even if those portrayals are inaccurate. In real life, Marines do shoot at targets with Osama bin Laden’s face on them, and they even hang them up on the walls of the Marine Corps’ film liaison office—the very same office that made the producers of *JAG* take Osama bin Laden’s face off a firing-range target because it might give television viewers the impression that Marines are “assassins.”

The Marine Corps’ film office in Los Angeles has a whole room full

of files documenting the changes they've asked producers to make on other films and TV shows, with an entire shelf stocked with thousands of pages of memos and notes detailing the changes the Marines have gotten the producers of *JAG* to make on shows produced over the last eight seasons.

The numerous changes made on "Act of Terror" are typical of the changes large and small that the military insists on making when it gets involved in the filmmaking process. On *JAG*, most of the changes the Marines have demanded over the years are relatively minor, dealing with such things as the proper way to salute (marines don't salute indoors), the proper use of military jargon, and the finer points of military law and courtroom procedures. But many of the changes involve significant alterations of dialogue and content.

In "Act of Terror," one of the Arab terrorists who blew up the navy warship is captured, and as he is being brought to trial, a Marine guard who is assigned to protect the prisoner shoots and kills him. The guard, Cpl. Amos Barry, whose brother had been killed by terrorists at the Khobar Towers bombing in Saudi Arabia, is then put on trial, and the series' star, Lt. Cdr. Harmon (Harm) Rabb Jr. (played by actor David James Elliott), is assigned to defend him. The story then becomes a morality play about revenge and the dangers of vigilantism. But the Marine Corps had a say in how this was handled, as well, insisting that dialogue be changed to make the leader of the corporal's FAST team—Lt. Royce Caron—sound less racist and less sympathetic to the corporal's act of revenge.

In the original script, in the scene where Harm and Caron are watching members of the FAST team shoot at targets with bin Laden's face on them, Caron tries to explain to Harm why the corporal killed the captured terrorist—named Nasseen—that he was supposed to be guarding.

Caron says: "After his brother died [in the Khobar bombing], something shifted."

"Shifted how?" Harm asks.

"He was still a good Marine, don't get me wrong," Caron replies. "But he . . . he lost his focus . . . became obsessed."

"Obsessed with what?" asks Harm.

"Terrorism, what else?" Caron says. "He followed it around the world

like a groupie. When our embassies were bombed in Kenya and Tanzania, he was ready to kick serious Arab butt.”

“Most of us were,” Harm says. “Would you say he was driven by hatred toward Arabs?”

“Only the terrorist variety,” Caron replies.

“Did he know what he was doing when he shot Nasseen?” Harm asks.

“I don’t know,” Caron replies. “But between you and me, I’m glad the guy’s dead. I just wish that it wasn’t one of my men that killed him.” After stepping up to the firing line and taking a few shots at the Osama target, Caron adds: “Corporal Barry did what Marines are trained to do—kill the enemy.”

The Marine Corps’ film office, however, would have none of this and told the producers that if they wanted access to the CH-46 Sea Knight assault helicopter and the crew to fly it, they would have to change the dialogue.

“Lt. Caron states that Corporal Barry ‘was ready to kick serious Arab butt,’” Captain Morgan wrote in his notes to the producers. “Marines, especially in FAST, are taught that the terms ‘Arab’ and ‘terrorist’ are not interchangeable. Iranians are not Arabs, Shiites are not Arabs, PIRA (Provisional Irish Republican Army), PLO are not Arabs. We have a quality relationship with the Saudi, Qatari and United Arab Emirates governments. So it doesn’t benefit a professional to view the threat with a racist attitude. Recommend lieutenant’s line be ‘—serious terrorist butt.’

“It is understandable that Lt. Caron confides . . . ‘I’m glad the guy’s dead,’ but he should specify that he wishes it wasn’t a MARINE that killed him; not simply one of his men. Remember, a Marine is a Marine, even if he isn’t in Caron’s chain-of-command.”

Morgan also took issue with Caron’s line of dialogue that says: “Corporal Barry did what Marines are trained to do—kill the enemy.” Morgan wrote: “True, but at the time of the murder, Nasseen was a prisoner. Lt. Caron recognizes the difference, even if Corporal Barry didn’t. HE NEEDS TO SAY THIS. Recommend Caron also say, ‘But this guy was a prisoner, and Marines don’t murder non-combatants. . . . That’s where Barry went wrong. He didn’t remember that there’s a difference.’”

All of these changes made it into the final shooting script, which now reads like this:

"After his brother died, something shifted," Lt. Caron says.

"Shifted how?" Harm asks.

"He was still a good Marine," Caron says. "But he—he lost his focus—became obsessed."

"With what?" Harm asks.

"Terrorism, sir," Caron says. "He followed it around the world like a groupie. When the embassies were bombed in Kenya and Tanzania, he was ready to kick serious butt."

"Would you say he was driven by hatred toward Arabs?" Harm asks.

"Only the terrorist variety, sir."

"Do you think he knew what he was doing when he shot Nasseen?" Harm asks.

"I don't know, sir," Caron replies. "But I'm glad the guy's dead. I just wish it wasn't a Marine that killed him." After stepping up to the firing line and taking a few shots at the target, which no longer has the visage of Osama bin Laden on it, Caron adds: "We're trained to kill the enemy, Commander. Not prisoners."

A few days after the changes were made, Phil Strub in the Pentagon wrote a letter to the show's producers giving the final okay for the use of the Marine helicopter and crew. "We're pleased to approve military assistance in the production of the 'Act of Terror' episode of the CBS series 'J.A.G.,'" Strub wrote. "We understand that the assistance consists of filming on September 18 at Van Nuys Airport in California, with a CH-46 helicopter. . . . We wish you success in production, and look forward to viewing the completed episode before it is aired to the public."

The Pentagon was happy, the Marine Corps was happy, and the producers got the helicopter and crew they wanted. The viewers, however, never knew that the show they'd just watched had been edited and pre-screened by the military.

# ★ CHAPTER 17 ★

## “A 45-MINUTE COMMERCIAL FOR MARINE AVIATION”

Phil Strub and the Marines hated the first season of *Pensacola: Wings of Gold*, the syndicated television series that starred James Brolin as a Marine Corps flight instructor. The first season’s episodes featured steamy storylines about rowdy young pilots who flew jets by day, wooed the ladies by night, and solved mysteries in their spare time. “It was really an *A Team* meets *Melrose Place* kind of thing,” recalls Marine Corps Maj. Matt Morgan, who worked as a technical advisor on the show.

The Corps, in fact, thought so little of the show that at the end of the first season, Maj. T. V. Johnson, the director of the Marine Corps’ film liaison office in Los Angeles, told the show’s producers that they should hire a whole new team of writers for the second season.

“Hope last season’s writers haven’t been rehired,” Johnson wrote on October 29, 1998, in the opening line of an e-mail to Jerry Broeckert, the show’s coproducer.

Technically, Hollywood’s military handlers aren’t supposed to make casting recommendations or suggestions about which writers should be hired or fired. Those are creative decisions that are completely outside the scope of the Pentagon’s guidelines for assisting film and TV productions. But Johnson’s e-mail shows that it does happen, while graphically demonstrating the utter disregard that some in the military have for the sanctity of the creative process—a sneering contempt that is seen over and over in the Pentagon’s own documents.

A few months later, Major Johnson wrote a memo that he forwarded to Phil Strub, his boss at the Pentagon, in which he argued that despite the show's corny plots and lame characters, the Marine Corps was still getting its money's worth out of the show, which was filmed at the Miramar Marine Air Station in San Diego.

"As far as getting more bang for our buck when it comes to PWOG [*Pensacola: Wings of Gold*], my opinion is that we get quite a lot out of them as it is," Johnson said in his memo. "By no means are we giving away the store at Miramar. The show alone is pretty much a 45-minute commercial for Marine aviation that reaches 3-5 million homes per week. That's where our payoff is. If we can shape the script so that the Marines and other service members depicted always do the right thing in the end, we've made our money."

And shape the scripts they did.

On the "Grey Ghost" episode from the first season, the Marine Corps got the producers to delete two words from a line of dialogue that said a deadly biological weapon that had found its way onto the black market had been developed many years ago by the United States government.

In the original script, dated August 22, 1997, one of the characters states that a scientist working in a private lab in Nova Scotia had died the day before from massive respiratory failure. "Autopsy showed the man died from exposure to a U.S. developed substance called BW659," the character says, noting that the substance is a deadly biological weapon known as the Grey Ghost. Another character notes "all that kind of stuff's outlawed now," making it clear that America is no longer in the business of making such weapons.

After reading the script, however, Maj. Nancy LaLuntas, head of the Marine Corps' film liaison office in Los Angeles, told the producers that the script would have to be changed if they wanted the Marines' assistance in filming it.

"Must eliminate all references to U.S. government involvement in bio-warfare, past, present & future," she said in an e-mail to Jerry Broeckert, the show's coproducer. "It's too subtle that the effort took place in the past. Recommend replacing 'US' with 'Old Soviet' or 'old Warsaw Pact.'"

And the producers caved in without a fight, even though the United States had once been one of the world's leading manufacturers of biolog-

ical weapons. The same day the producers received LaLuntas’s notes, they got the writers to change the script so that the words “U.S. developed” were eliminated. The dialogue in the revised script now states: “Autopsy showed the man died from exposure to a substance called BW659.”

The offending dialogue had been sanitized.

In the same script, the Marines also got the producers to change the nationality of the bad guys who are selling this stuff on the black market. The original script called for the bad guys to be Ukrainians. Trouble is, although Ukrainians used to be our enemies, they are now our friends. The Marine Corps felt it would be better to have the bad guys come from some unidentifiable crime cartel, or better yet, from an Arab country that’s an enemy of the United States.

“Recommend replacing Ukrainians with Libyans, Iraqis, the cartel or ‘my clients,’” Johnson told the producers, who dutifully deleted the Ukrainians and made the bad guys come from Sudan—another Muslim country the Pentagon doesn’t like.

And the part about Marines flying in and busting up the illegal bioweapons lab in Nova Scotia without the consent of the Canadians? That’s got to go, as well, the Marines said. “We cannot operate unilaterally in Canada,” Johnson told the producers. “Must either create a fictional country, put lab in the U.S., on a fictional island in international waters, etc., or must indicate official Canada cooperation in dialogue in several scenes.” Okay, said the producers, who promptly changed the location of the lab to northern Minnesota.

So in the end, the Ukrainians were no longer the bad guys; Canada was no longer the base of the villains’ operations; and the bioweapon was no longer a product of American science.

Ironically, the coproducer on the show with whom the Marine Corps relayed these requests for changes was himself the former head of the Marine Corps’ film liaison office in Los Angeles.

Lt. Col. Jerry Broeckert, who had been the Marine Corps’ chief censor in Hollywood, retired from the Corps in 1996 and soon landed a cushy job working for Stu Segall, the producer of *Pensacola: Wings of Gold*. After the first season, Broeckert helped retool the series into something more along the lines of a low-budget *Top Gun*, but his main job was securing the Marines’ approval for each week’s script so that the show



could get access to the Corps' jet fighters, helicopters, and locations. And that put him in daily contact with the Marine Corps' film office in Los Angeles—the same office he'd formerly run. And that made just about everybody in the Marines' film office uncomfortable. Switching sides like that was embarrassing to the Corps: It looked funny—like the Marine Corps' film office was just a stepping-stone to a high-paying job in Hollywood.

Numerous others have made the leap from military film offices to the movie studios.

Fifteen years before Broeckert left the Corps, Air Force Lt. Col. Duncan Wilmore found himself working for the same production company that only a few months earlier had come to him for assistance. Wilmore was chief of the air force's office of public information in Los Angeles when a request came in from Chartoff-Winkler Productions for assistance on their next picture, *The Right Stuff*. Wilmore read the script and thought that the story of the early days of the American space program was perfect just the way it was written.

"We recommend support of this project without script change," he wrote in a memo, dated October 23, 1981, to his bosses at the Pentagon.

Within three months, Wilmore had quit the air force and had gone to work for Chartoff-Winkler Productions as their technical advisor. His main job was to secure assistance for the project from the same people he'd been working with only a few days earlier.

"Enclosed is a copy of our formal request to DOD for military support on 'The Right Stuff,'" Wilmore wrote on Chartoff-Winkler Productions stationery in a letter dated January 16, 1982, to Capt. Dale Patterson, his former counterpart at the navy's office of information in Los Angeles.

The use of civilian contacts to generate postservice employment is nothing new for high-ranking military officers. Indeed, the aerospace and defense industries are full of former generals and colonels who once did the procuring of weapons systems, but who are now on the other side selling those same systems to their former colleagues at the Pentagon. But Hollywood isn't supposed to be selling weapons systems; it's supposed to be telling stories. But when enough elements of the entertainment industry and the military become interchangeable, one has to wonder: Who's really telling these stories, anyway?

But Broeckert and Wilmore were not the first to make the leap.

John Horton, who in 1949 had helped draft the DOD’s first formal agreement for cooperating with the entertainment industry, left the military and went straight to work for Hollywood, helping more than a hundred film and TV producers navigate the maze of red tape that he’d helped create.

And Horton’s assistant, former Army Maj. Ray Smith, had also worked in the Pentagon’s film office, reading scripts and making recommendations to Don Baruch, Phil Strub’s predecessor, as to which films the DOD should support and which ones it shouldn’t. “I’m the guy who turned down *Apocalypse Now*,” Smith says with a laugh. “I read the script and said, ‘We can’t do this. The army does not lend officers to the CIA to execute or murder other army officers. And even if we did, we wouldn’t help you make it.’ Gen. Gordon Hill, the army’s chief of public affairs, agreed, and that’s what he told Coppola, who had complained to the secretary of defense that he was being censored.”

Smith left the army in 1980 and two years later went to work for Horton helping producers get assistance from the military. Ironically, he was hired by Coppola in 1986 to help get Pentagon assistance for *Gardens of Stone*, a film starring James Caan as a tough but caring sergeant assigned to the army’s “Old Guard” burial detail at Arlington National Cemetery during the Vietnam War. The film ended up getting assistance from the army, but only after Coppola agreed to make a few changes.

“There were a lot of things—mainly foul language—that could have been show stoppers,” Smith recalls. “But it was worked out. I would talk to Mr. Coppola and he would agree to drop one of the ‘m.f.’ [mother fucker] words so it wouldn’t bother the army so much.”

Smith never told Coppola that he’d been the one who’d recommended that the Department of Defense not assist him on *Apocalypse Now*. Smith says that he was going to tell the director at the wrap party for *Gardens of Stone*, but he never got the chance to because a distraught Coppola didn’t make an appearance—his son had been killed that very same day in a boating accident.

Another thing that bothered the army was a scene in which the recently widowed wife of a cheating husband comes to his funeral and spits on his grave.

“The scene was in the book,” recalls Ron Bass, who wrote the script from Nicholas Proffitt’s novel. “Her husband was a philanderer. He was

always running around with other women. When he is killed in Vietnam, she comes to the grave and says, 'You son of a bitch, now I know where you're at,' and she spits in it."

"I was told it was taken out of the script," recalls Proffitt. "It was the price of cooperation, and without cooperation, it couldn't have been made."

The army also made the producers alter a line of gallows humor in the script in which members of the burial detail joke about being in a hurry to get the funeral over with. In the book, the soldiers mutter under their breaths: "Ashes to ashes, dust to dust, let's plant this prick and get on the bus."

"That was the original line," Proffitt recalls, "and they changed it after the army complained. They thought that showed disrespect to the dead, which of course it did."

So the script was changed to take out the profanity and the derogatory reference to a fallen soldier. In the movie, the line now reads: "Ashes to ashes, dust to dust, why don't we hurry this up so we can get back on the bus."

Proffitt, however, who based his book on his own experiences as a member of the Old Guard burial detail at Arlington Cemetery, says that the line that he used in his book was actually used by members of his squad.

"I heard that every day," Proffitt recalls with a laugh. "They always used an alliteration. If the dead guy was a man, they'd say, 'Let's bury this bastard and get on the bus' or 'Let's drop this dip shit and get on the bus,' and if it was a woman, it would be, 'Let's cover this cunt and get on the bus.' It was all a part of it."

So once again, the army was less interested in seeing an accurate and honest depiction of military life than it was in making sure the portrayal was a positive one.

# ★ CHAPTER 18 ★

## BENDING THE RULES

In 1997, the German Ministry of Defense was putting heavy pressure on the Pentagon to help out two German production companies that wanted to shoot parts of their TV movies—*Jets* and *Silver Wings*—on an American airbase in Texas. The German producers had the full support and backing of the Luftwaffe (the German air force) and the Bundeswehr (the German Federal Army) but they wanted to film at Sheppard Air Force Base in Texas, where many German pilots are trained.

The U.S. Air Force was willing to help out, but there was a problem: It had long been the Pentagon's stated policy to assist only those productions that could reasonably be expected to have a "direct public affairs benefit within the United States."

The DOD's written guidelines state that film productions that receive assistance from the Pentagon must not only "be in the best interest of public understanding of the U.S. Armed Forces," but must also "provide services to the general public relating to, or enhancing, the U.S. Armed Forces' recruiting and retention programs." And when the DOD guidelines refer to the "public" and to the "general public," they are referring to the *American* public—not the German public.

Phil Strub, the head of the Pentagon's film office, was well versed in the rules. He'd cited them often enough when denying military assistance to American producers whose projects he didn't like. But Strub and his boss at the Pentagon—Kenneth H. Bacon, the assistant secretary of

defense for public affairs—were willing to bend the rules for the Germans.

Explaining the drawbacks of supporting the German production, Strub, in an October 28, 1997, letter to Bacon, wrote: “Neither project meets our criteria for support because they are not likely to be seen by American viewers. Also there is concern about being inundated with requests from production companies in other NATO nations that wish to exploit the Sheppard Air Force Base and other US-hosted training as relatively inexpensive means for greatly increasing the quality and interest level of their productions.”

But Dr. Han-Dieter Wichter, the spokesman for the German Ministry of Defense, pleaded with Strub and Bacon to reconsider.

“I am writing to you to ask for your assistance in a matter of key importance to me, especially considering the strong wish we both have to intensify US-German military cooperation in PR [public relations],” Wichter wrote in a letter to Bacon dated October 23, 1997. “Two renowned German film companies are currently planning, independently of each other, serial projects for German television concerning German Air Force jet pilots and their training in the USA.

“These projects are the first step of a drive to portray the Bundeswehr in German television and I believe a chance to achieve a breakthrough in the effort to make the Bundeswehr a subject for the German media. It is because the film projects are of such eminent importance that Federal Defense Minister Ruhe has promised the film companies the support of the Bundeswehr in implementing them. . . . I sincerely hope that you will give me your assistance in this matter and help achieve a breakthrough in enhancing the Bundeswehr’s image in the entertainment sector by way of these projects.”

Wichter’s letter did the trick. After reading it, Strub told his boss: “In light of the Luftwaffe’s official expression of encouragement and because the productions might be of public information value to us, even if among only European viewers, we concurred with the Air Force proposal that the companies pool their requirements and their production assets and film together.”

Later, in a November 10 letter authorizing the U.S. Air Force to provide assistance to the German productions, Strub wrote: “We understand that the production is intended principally for German television viewers

and is unlikely to be seen in the United States. However, we note the interest of the German Ministry of Defense and its assertion that the production will be of benefit in creating awareness about the value and importance of the training. Accordingly, we authorize the filming at Sheppard Air Force Base as an exception to our policy of mandating direct public affairs benefit within the United States.”

But of course, before they would get the U.S. military’s cooperation, the German producers would have to go through the same sanitization process that American producers who seek the Pentagon’s assistance must go through. And the Germans were more than willing to rewrite scenes that Strub didn’t like.

“Every American depicted in the film will be totally positive in character,” wrote Michael Smeaton, the president of the German company that would be producing *Jets*, in a letter sent to Strub. “Sheppard Air Force Base will be depicted with impeccable standards of safety and security, and the highest standards in the world in regard to quality of instruction. For example, a former sequence that suggested a cadet and a friend might be improperly in a jet on the tarmac in a restricted area has been removed. No such impropriety of any kind will be in this film. Even the fatal accident of the pilot named Phil could be rewritten to include activating his ejector seat. Any further revisions of the script can be discussed.”

Smeaton went on to say that “one of the main characters in the film, the instructor Johnson, will be an American and will be played by a popular American actor. He will be an example to the trainees and an ideal pilot. He will be the main instructor and every action he does, every word he speaks, will be scrutinized for correctness. This character will be positive and exemplary in all actions and dialogues. Other Americans, such as pilots in training, will be depicted as models of exemplary behavior.”

With those assurances, the German production companies were allowed to film at the air force base for five days in December 1997.

Strub also bent the rules two years earlier when he authorized the army and the navy to assist the production of *Executive Decision*, a preposterous action movie starring Kurt Russell as a civilian consultant to the army who saves the nation’s capital from Islamic terrorists who have hijacked a 747 and are planning to use it as a weapon to deliver a nerve gas attack.

The Pentagon's rules for providing assistance to filmmakers state that "fictional portrayals must depict a feasible interpretation of military life, operations and policies." But there was nothing feasible about the military operation depicted in *Executive Decision*, which showed army commandos being placed onboard the hijacked 747 in mid-flight.

In the movie, the commandos are transported to the hijacked plane aboard an F-117 stealth fighter, which is equipped with a special hook-up device that, once the F-117 secretly docks with the 747, allows the commandos to board the jetliner undetected by the terrorists. In fact, no airplane in the military's arsenal has such capabilities, but that didn't stop the Pentagon from giving the producers access to all the ships and planes they wanted. The movie would make the military look good, and that's all that mattered regardless of what the Pentagon's guidelines say.

The Pentagon has given cooperation to numerous other movies with far-fetched storylines, including *Armageddon*, in which oil rig workers are transported aboard the space shuttle to intercept and destroy an Earth-threatening asteroid; *Jurassic Park III*, where the Marines and the navy are called in to rescue a group of Americans who are stranded on an island full of man-eating dinosaurs; and *The Final Countdown*, in which a nuclear aircraft carrier is transported back in time to Pearl Harbor on the eve of the Japanese attack.

The Pentagon had no problem bending the rules to help those unfeasible films because they made the military look good, but it won't even follow its own rules if it means assisting fact-based stories that might make the military look bad.

That's what happened in 1988 when the producers of *Family of Spies* asked the navy for help in making their TV miniseries about the John Walker spy case. The producers wanted to shoot part of their movie onboard a real navy ship, and to film navy planes taking off from aircraft carriers. But the navy wanted no part in telling the real-life story of a chief petty officer who betrayed his country by selling thousands of top-secret codes and encrypted messages to the Russians—no matter how fair and factual it was.

Walker, who is widely believed to have betrayed more military secrets than any other spy, began working for the Soviet Union in 1967, and then after his retirement from the navy, recruited his son, his brother,

and his best friend to continue his dirty work. And the navy might not have ever broken the spy ring if Walker's wife hadn't turned him in in 1985.

The CBS miniseries, which would star Powers Boothe as John Walker and Leslie Ann Warren as his wife, was based entirely on fact. But it was too factual for the navy. Internal Pentagon memos reveal that after reading the script, the navy recognized that it gave an accurate, fair, and balanced picture of the case. But the navy didn't want to help anyone tell this embarrassing story, especially if it were true.

"Overall, this is not a bad script," wrote Capt. Michael T. Sherman, director of the navy's West Coast Office of Information, in a memo to his superiors at the Pentagon. "There is no attempt to make the Navy look stupid throughout the script. In fact, Walker is painted as the disreputable, amoral, lying cretin that he really is—which comes through loud and clear. . . . With the exception of the implicit stupidity of the Navy in allowing this sleaze-ball access to a multitude of secrets, the Navy does not come off badly in the script. There are no dummies, caricatures, badly behaved officers or enlisted men and women. The four principal characters are presented as the cheap, greedy men that they were. The character development is excellent and you can see the pressure and stress put on the family members as they wrestle with their consciences when confronted with the knowledge of what the Walkers were doing."

Sherman's superiors in the Navy Department, however, didn't care about any of that. Any story about the Walker spy case—even a true story—would be bad for the navy. Therefore, they would not allow the producers to film on any navy ships or locations.

"It is considered that the production holds little or no benefit for the Navy or the Department of Defense," wrote Adm. J. B. Finkelstein, chief of information for the Navy Department, in a memo to the assistant secretary of defense for public affairs.

Don Baruch, Strub's predecessor in the Pentagon film office, agreed. "This office concurs in Admiral Finkelstein's observation—which rules out consideration of any requests for use of aircraft and filming dramatic sequences on Navy ships or installations."

In the end, the filmmakers were able to make their two-part, four-hour miniseries without the navy's ships and airplanes. It aired on CBS in



February 1990, and was probably a better story without the navy's involvement—the producers didn't have to wheel and deal with the facts to satisfy navy censors, as so many other filmmakers had done before and since.

But the navy's refusal to lend assistance to producers who were trying to tell a true story based on facts that even the navy didn't dispute shows that the DOD is not above changing the rules when it suits its purposes.

# ★ CHAPTER 19 ★

**“I WANT PAGE SIX AND SEVEN COMPLETELY THROWN OUT OR YOU DON’T GET TO USE OUR AIRCRAFT CARRIER”**

The Department of Defense is not the only government-funded organization that tries to influence filmmakers. The CIA, the FBI, the State Department, the Secret Service, and the White House also have film industry liaison personnel who try very hard to persuade filmmakers to present their organizations in a favorable light.

The CIA came to the game late, starting its film industry outreach program in 1996, when the agency decided to form a film liaison office to counteract the negative portrayals the CIA felt it was always getting in movies and TV shows.

“The idea for this came in the James Woolsey administration when the people on the seventh floor [senior CIA management] looked around and said, ‘We have an image problem,’” recalls Chase Brandon, the CIA’s liaison to the film industry. “What shows up about us in the movies is that the villains tend to be ex-CIA operatives or rogue operatives. They are always fomenting revolution or serving as hit men. There is always some ugly representation of us as a conspiratorial government-overthrow apparatus. The references to us and our people in the movies are almost universally negative.”

Brandon’s job is to get filmmakers to portray the CIA in a more positive light, but unlike Phil Strub, his counterpart at the Pentagon, Brandon doesn’t have much leverage to make movie producers see things his way. He doesn’t have any tanks, submarines, helicopters, or aircraft carriers to offer them. All he has to offer filmmakers is the expertise of CIA personnel and permission to shoot at the CIA’s headquarters in Langley, Vir-

ginia. That gives Brandon much less bargaining power than Strub when it comes to requesting script changes.

“Phil Strub can actually say, ‘I want page six and seven completely thrown out or you don’t get to use our aircraft carrier,’” Brandon says with a laugh. “We can’t do that because our only tangible barter, if you will, is to film here on our compound. The real money shot in any presentation about the agency is the lobby scene with the seal of the agency on the floor. If someone wants to have that in their script and they want to film here, and if there is something wrong or maliciously ugly about us, they can correct the part that’s factually wrong or temper whatever is maliciously ugly, and maybe they can film here. But if they have clichés about us as rogue assassins, I’m sorry, but we’re not going to let them come film here and use our people, because that’s not what we are.”

Brandon, formerly an undercover CIA officer who spent twenty-five years in the CIA’s “clandestine service” working counterinsurgency and counternarcotics cases in Central and South America and other parts of the world, provided CIA assistance to the long-running CBS series *The Agency* until it was cancelled in February 2004.

Ed Zuckerman, the series’ head writer, says that the CIA “cooperated on the pilot. They gave us a former CIA officer who wrote a book—with the CIA’s blessings—who is a consultant on the show.”

Because of security reasons, the series also used a lot of CIA personnel as extras when the show was filming at the CIA’s headquarters. “You cannot security-check a bunch of \$60-a-day extras,” he laughs.

The CIA also worked with the producers of Paramount’s *The Sum of All Fears*, the film based on the Tom Clancy novel that starred Ben Affleck as a first-year CIA officer who averts World War III. “I worked with them on the set,” Brandon says. “Ben came down and spent a day with me.”

Brandon also worked with producer Jerry Bruckheimer on *Bad Company*, a 2002 comedy that starred Anthony Hopkins and Chris Rock as CIA officers on the trail of terrorists who are shopping for a nuclear weapon.

“Hopkins is a senior Ops guy and Chris is a sophisticated Ops guy who is killed weeks before a major operation designed to take a nuclear bomb off the terrorist market,” Brandon says. “Chris has a twin brother and the agency goes and finds him. The twin brother is a New York City hustler, and the agency gives Hopkins two weeks to train him.”

The CIA also provided assistance to the 1999 Showtime movie *In the*

*Company of Spies*, which starred Tom Berenger as a retired CIA operations officer who is brought back into action to rescue a colleague who is being held captive in North Korea.

“They got extensive help from us,” Brandon says. “The cast came and spent time here in the building with us. All the production people came. We filmed part of the movie here. We were so pleased with the finished product that we had the movie premiere here. It was the first movie ever that we felt organizationally captured the spirit here and the true mission.”

More than five hundred CIA employees and their guests attended the screening. In a statement, the CIA said it hosted the film’s premiere “because it captures the profound dedication of the Agency’s men and women to the CIA’s mission and deep commitment to saving American lives and protecting American interests all over the world. It gives the viewer a sense of the effort and the expertise—the risks and the sacrifices—that the Agency’s essential intelligence work for the nation entails. Most important of all, it shows the integrity, excellence and bravery of Agency people.”

The CIA also supported Paramount’s *Patriot Games*—another film based on a Tom Clancy novel—but unlike the Pentagon, the CIA refused to support *Clear and Present Danger*, another Clancy novel that Paramount and the Pentagon turned into a film about CIA intrigue in Colombia. “We did not support that film because the story line was so ridiculous,” Brandon says.

Brandon maintains that films like *Three Days of the Condor*, which showed the CIA killing its own officers, and *Air America*, which showed CIA operatives smuggling drugs during the Vietnam War, were “totally preposterous and atrocious.” And it is those kinds of images that Brandon hopes to dissuade filmmakers from putting on the screen.

Since forming its film liaison office in 1996, Brandon says, “We’ve made enormous headway because we had nowhere to go but up. Image-wise, historically, we have not been treated very favorably. That was a function of the writers never doing any real research on how we operate, and us never being in the position to respond to any writer who would have attempted to do the research. So there’s fault on both sides how we’ve been depicted over the years.”

Brandon also acknowledged that like the Pentagon, the CIA offers assistance to filmmakers in the hope that it will help the agency’s recruiting efforts, although he says that’s not nearly as important to the CIA as it is to the Pentagon.

"There is an element of recruitment, but it is not as important," he says. "The people we attract are well-read and extremely intelligent. They have a fairly clear concept about what our mission is. Our concern about having a proper and factual image of us [in films] is not a function so much of us recruiting new people to come onboard, but a function of our pride in knowing what we did to win the Cold War, and of wanting to inform and educate the public that their tax money that keeps our front door open is money well spent."

The recruiting aspect, he says, "is not unimportant, but it's not as important as the military's effort. We have and always have had our own mechanism for recruiting people. What really drives us, more than anything else, is that we finally got tired of being universally cast as bad people."

In return for its cooperation, Brandon says the CIA enters into "a gentlemen's agreement" with filmmakers not to accidentally reveal any national security secrets.

"We have a gentlemen's agreement that as they are developing stories, we will help them look realistic without revealing anything that is actualistic," he says. "If they come up with a concept or a piece of technology that is too close to the truth, then the gentlemen's agreement is that we suggest another way for them to go so that they don't damage national security concerns. So far, that hasn't happened. But we cannot enter into any written agreement with a filmmaker. That is not what we are here to do."

Brandon says that the CIA doesn't demand script approval the way the Pentagon does. "It's not script approval," he says. "If somebody intends to do a show about the agency, they know there is a phone number and a name. If they want to try to get it right, they send me scripts, or outlines, or treatments. I read those, and I make comments about things that are factually incorrect or thematically at odds about how we really are. And in the end, if the filmmaker wants to make a realistic film about what we are, they can come here. Most people want to do it right. If they change the factually incorrect parts of the script, make modifications and changes, then I am in a position to offer them ad hoc support, which can include everything from our flag and seal, to opportunities to film on the compound or in the building after hours when it doesn't interfere with national security business. But unlike the Pentagon, I don't have any real leverage."

# ★ CHAPTER 20 ★

## TURNING VODKA INTO WATER

There was a lot about the original script for *The Presidio* that the army didn't like, and if the producers at Paramount Pictures wanted the army's assistance to help make the film, they were going to have to make some changes. One of the lines the army didn't like poked fun at the military's idea of family—and of the “duty” that military wives have to bear a lot of children for their husbands.

“In the military, they don't just have a child—they spawn,” joked Donna, the daughter of an army officer, to her boyfriend, Jay.

The army, however, thought the line was insulting to military wives.

“They thought it had a derogatory connotation,” says Fred Caruso, the film's coproducer. “It's like saying blacks have a lot of kids, or Irish drink a lot. It was kind of a joke that the writer put in.”

So the army told the producers to take the joke out. In their notes to the producers, the army said: “Delete entirely from Donna's second dialogue: ‘In the military they don't just have a child—they spawn.’”

To mollify the military—and to get permission to shoot on the grounds of the Presidio in San Francisco—the line was deleted.

But the producers would have to change a lot more than one line to get the Pentagon's approval to shoot their movie at the Presidio, even though the fort was otherwise open to the public.

“It was an open base,” recalls Al Zwirner, the Presidio's real-life provost marshal for many years who was the model for the film's lead

character, played by Sean Connery. “There weren’t any guards. There was nothing highly classified; no armored, no combat troops. The public could walk around the base. Hell, they could come right into my office. It was quite open. They even opened up a McDonald’s on the base.”

Paramount Pictures was the Pentagon’s favorite movie studio in 1987, the year Paramount was trying to get the Pentagon’s approval for *The Presidio*. A year earlier, Paramount had released *Top Gun*, the most successful collaboration between Hollywood and the military of all time. The film, starring Tom Cruise as a cocky naval aviator, was a huge box office hit, and a flood of young men had joined the navy after seeing it. And now Paramount had plans to produce five more movies with military themes that the Pentagon hoped would produce similar results.

Don Baruch, Phil Strub’s predecessor at the Pentagon’s film office, had given a preliminary green light to four of the films: *The Hunt for Red October*, *Flight of the Intruder*, *Hamburger Hill*, and *Top Gun II*. But he didn’t care for the fifth one—*The Presidio*. He didn’t like the story. It was about an investigation into the murder of a military policewoman on an army fort in San Francisco.

Baruch, the nephew of presidential advisor Bernard Baruch, was a fierce defender of the military’s image and a perfect gentleman who didn’t use foul language and didn’t like to hear it in the movies—not exactly the type of guy that screenwriters of the 1960s, 1970s, and 1980s would want sitting in judgment on their scripts.

“He never cursed,” recalls former Army Capt. Ray Smith, who worked with Baruch on numerous film projects for the studios. “He dressed like a gentleman of the 1930s. He would wear elegant suits, or a very elegant blazer and very civilized ties that looked like they came from Brooks Bros. He was like a European gentleman. He spoke very proper English, and he often referred to Greek and Roman mythology, like the listener had a knowledge of it.”

“Baruch was a tough old guy,” recalls film director Rod Lurie (*The Contender*, *The Last Castle*), who worked in the Pentagon’s public affairs office in 1983 as a cadet at West Point. “He was a legend. He was an older guy and he’d been there forever. He was very tough and it was not really his policy to cooperate with anyone at all. It was sort of one turn-down after another unless you were dealing with films that were actual recruiting posters, like *Top Gun*.”

Undaunted, Ned Tanen, who was then president of Paramount's motion picture group, asked for a meeting with Baruch's boss—Robert Sims, the assistant secretary of defense for public affairs—to let him know that Paramount was intent on making *The Presidio* a movie the army would be proud of.

Tanen called John Horton, Hollywood's legendary liaison to the Pentagon, and Horton called Baruch to see about arranging the meeting with Sims.

After talking to Horton, Baruch wrote a letter, dated June 17, 1987, to Sims: "John Horton advised that Mr. Tanen is personally very concerned about doing everything possible to obtain Army and our approval/assistance on a present day story that takes place at the Presidio. . . . Mr. Tanen feels it is important to meet you and express the satisfaction of past association, such as assistance on 'Top Gun' . . . and to look forward to productions such as 'Hunt for Red October,' 'Flight of the Intruder' and 'Top Gun II.' FYI, Paramount also is releasing 'Hamburger Hill,' which we recently accepted."

Baruch wanted Paramount to make the other films because, like *Top Gun*, they had the potential of increasing enlistments in the all-volunteer armed services. The army wasn't very enthusiastic about helping *The Presidio*, but in the spirit of giving a little to get a lot, Baruch told Sims that unless the army flatly refused, the Pentagon should consider approving assistance for the film just to keep Paramount happy—and to keep the studio busy making pro-military movies.

"From what I know of the story, it is possible the Army may not feel that they would get enough out of the picture even with changes they have or still could make," Baruch wrote in his June 17 letter to Sims. "However, if the Army reaction becomes a so-what, neutral, perhaps we could ask for further consideration to perhaps tilt in Paramount's favor because of all the other productions."

Tanen had his meeting with Sims and assured him that Paramount would do everything possible to make the military look good in *The Presidio*. After the meeting, Baruch wrote a memo saying: "Mr. Ned Tanen, at a meeting with Mr. Robert Sims, said he would not do anything that would be unpatriotic."

The army, however, was still skeptical. Two weeks after Tanen's meeting with Sims, Col. Miguel Monteverde, chief of the Army Depart-



ment's Policy and Plans Division, wrote a memo to Baruch saying: "A complete rewrite of the story line, the Army characters and their activities would be required before we could reconsider this script for DOD cooperation."

So Paramount got the writer, Larry Ferguson, who was also writing *The Hunt for Red October*, to do the rewrites.

In the original script, Col. Alan Caldwell (Sean Connery), the Presidio's provost marshal, and Jay Austin (Mark Harmon), a tough San Francisco cop, are teamed together to solve the murder of a military police-woman at the Presidio. They don't like each other much and butt heads over jurisdiction—and over the affection of Caldwell's daughter, Donna (Meg Ryan). But as their investigation widens, the colonel and the cop come to respect one another, and they soon discover that the MP was murdered to cover up a diamond smuggling ring that's being run out of the Presidio by a bunch of army veterans who'd served together in Vietnam.

One of the culprits is Col. Paul Lawrence, a high-ranking officer stationed at the Presidio, and another turns out to be Caldwell's best friend, Ross Maclure (who would be played by Jack Warden), a retired sergeant major who saved Caldwell's life during the Korean War, and who won the Medal of Honor for his gallantry.

In the original script, the black market diamonds are smuggled from Europe into the United States aboard air force cargo jets concealed in bottles of vodka bound for the Presidio's noncommissioned officers' club. Army transport trucks would pick up the cases of booze, and on their way to the Presidio the bottles with the diamonds would be off-loaded to a waiting car and taken to the ringleader's penthouse.

But the scam hits a snag when one of the bottles containing stolen diamonds is delivered to the NCO club by mistake. Colonel Lawrence, a crooked army officer who is part of the smuggling ring, breaks into the club to retrieve the diamonds, but when an MP responds to the alarm, he kills her and, while escaping through the streets of San Francisco, shoots a policeman.

Austin suspects that Lawrence is involved, but when Austin and Caldwell pay the colonel a visit, Caldwell abruptly ends Austin's questioning and pulls him out of the office.

A ballistics report determines that the murder weapon is a rare Russian-made Takarov pistol, and when Austin learns that Caldwell concealed the fact that he knew that Colonel Lawrence once owned a similar weapon, he accuses Caldwell of covering up for a fellow officer.

In the original script, Austin yells at Caldwell, “You knew all along, didn’t you? You’re still trying to protect that rotten bastard.”

“You don’t have any proof that’s the gun we’re looking for,” Caldwell, answers calmly.

“What the hell is with goddam officers?” Austin angrily retorts. “Every mother’s son of you will do anything to cover.”

“This is the United States Army, son, we take care of our own,” Caldwell sternly replies.

The real-life army, however, objected to this scene and wanted it changed.

“We have completed a review of subject script and staffed it with appropriate Army agencies and commands,” wrote Colonel Monteverde in a memo to Baruch. “As a result of this, we have surfaced several major problems with the script which, unless resolved, will not permit us to consider this production for Army assistance.”

One of these “major problems,” Monteverde wrote, is “the script’s implications that an ‘old boy’ network protects officers, and that officers stick together to protect their own, no matter what the circumstances.”

In their notes to the producers, the army wrote: “Delete the exchange between Austin and Caldwell about covering up for another officer. For an officer to do this would violate the Army’s code of ethics.”

So the producers dutifully changed the script and deleted this entire exchange between Austin and Caldwell, including Caldwell’s line, in which he says: “This is the Army, son, we take care of our own.”

But there were numerous other changes the army wanted the producers to make. Indeed, the army flatly refused to assist a movie that showed two of the main characters—Caldwell and Maclure—drinking booze on an army facility while on duty.

In the original script, Maclure, who runs the Presidio’s museum, takes Caldwell into his office, where Caldwell tells his old friend about the progress he’s been making in the murder investigation. The script reads: “At a desk in the corner, Maclure opens a drawer, placing two bottles of whisky and two shot glasses on the desk. A piece of tape is on each bottle with their names on them. They drink.”

Colonel Monteverde, however, told Baruch in his memo: “The depiction of the use of alcohol by military personnel, especially while on duty, is contrary to the Army’s stated policy on, and efforts to, de-glamorize alcohol.”

The producers agreed to change this scene, as well. So now, in the movie, Caldwell tells his old friend about the murder investigation while taking a stroll around the museum. The whisky bottles and drinking on duty have been eliminated.

The real-life army, however, didn't stop there. They also objected to the use of booze as the delivery device for the stolen diamonds.

"The method used to smuggle the diamonds is not plausible," Monteverde wrote in his memo to Baruch. "Army clubs in the U.S. are not supplied from Europe. Liquor is bought by clubs from local distributors. In the U.S., a club does not buy directly, or receive direct shipments from an overseas supplier. Alcoholic beverages produced in a foreign country are purchased from U.S. importers and the military services pay all customs/duties on foreign products. Further, it is against the law for military vehicles to transport liquor in the U.S."

This objection caused a real problem for the producers because it attacked the central element of their crime ring's scheme, which was the engine that drove the rest of the story. The smuggled diamonds were invisible to the naked eye at the bottom of the vodka bottles, but if they couldn't smuggle the diamonds into the country in bottles of vodka, what clear liquid could they use?

So the producers went back to the drawing board and came up with a simple although even more implausible answer. They would have the bad guys smuggle their diamonds into the country in big bottles of water—the kind used in water coolers. Never mind that the plot now made no sense: Why would the army be importing bottled water from Europe aboard air force transport planes?

And this change required other changes. In the original script, Austin becomes suspicious when he finds an empty vodka bottle in the room where the MP has been killed, and that its contents had been emptied into a potted plant. A plant watered with vodka is suspicious, indeed. But now that the army had put the kibosh on using vodka as the mode of delivering the smuggled diamonds, the producers somehow had to make it look suspicious that a potted plant had been watered with water. The filmmakers now try to explain that Austin becomes suspicious after discovering that one of the potted plants had been watered, and that the others in the room were dry. It's a clue that doesn't really make much sense anymore, but it mollified the army, and that's what mattered most.

But the producers still had one last problem they'd have to address if they were going to get the army's assistance: the Pentagon didn't want Maclure, a Medal of Honor winner, to commit suicide at the end of the movie when Caldwell and Austin discover that he's involved in the smuggling ring.

Near the end of the original script, Maclure has a change of heart and wants out of the criminal enterprise when he finds that his cohorts are going to kill Caldwell, his best friend. Maclure learns of their intentions as the other three men are gathered around a sink in the penthouse kitchen of the ringleader, corrupt businessman Arthur Peale, pouring bottles of Monopolow vodka into a strainer to reveal a fortune in smuggled diamonds.

"Count me out," Maclure tells Peale, finally developing a conscience.

"If you want more money," Peale tells him.

"It's not the money," Maclure interrupts. "I never got involved in this for the money."

Maclure never does reveal why he got involved, but in the end he tells Peale he wants out because "It's gone too far. I don't want no more killing."

Just then, Caldwell and Austin break into the room and a gunfight breaks out, but Maclure slips out. After killing the other bad guys, Caldwell and Austin follow Maclure back to his office at the Presidio where they find him dead—dressed in his old army uniform with the Medal of Honor hanging around his neck, a self-inflicted gunshot wound to the head.

Baruch, however, didn't want the film to show a Medal of Honor winner committing suicide. In an internal memo, Baruch wrote that the "suicide of a Medal of Honor recipient" was one of the "inherent problems/concerns" he had with the script.

So the script was rewritten again, and instead of killing himself, Maclure is now killed by the bad guys.

In the movie's climactic scene, Maclure is no longer seen dividing up the spoils with his fellow crooks, but rather, he bursts in on them and, brandishing a gun, tells them that he is turning them all in—including himself.

"This shit is gonna stop," he says. "I'm gonna make it right."

One of the crooks sneaks up behind him, however, and knocks him out. But just then, Caldwell and Austin break in and the bad guys flee. Maclure comes to in time to join Caldwell and Austin in their gunfight with the crooks. In the end, Maclure is shot by a bad guy, but in his last heroic act before dying, he tosses a gun to Caldwell, who shoots and kills the last remaining crook.

So now instead of killing himself, Maclure has redeemed himself and died saving his friend—just like the Pentagon wanted.

The army was finally okay with the script, but now the air force wanted some changes, as well. They wanted a scene added to the script in which the air force's Office of Special Investigations would be shown helping to bust up the crime ring, which was using air force transport planes to smuggle the diamonds from Europe into the United States. The producers agreed to add the scene, and the Pentagon finally gave the producers permission to shoot their film on the grounds of the Presidio.

The cast and crew would spend less than two weeks shooting at the Presidio. They filmed a scene at the army cemetery; shot a scene inside the museum; filmed the exteriors of several bunkers and buildings at the fort; and filmed a brief scene inside the officers' club. The most trouble the army went to for the film was providing a military band and some uniformed personnel to take part in a parade that was shot on the Presidio's parade grounds—a scene that is shown at the very beginning of the film.

Production of the film was completed in October 1987, but when the finished film was screened at the Pentagon, air force officials were dismayed to see that the scene about the Office of Special Investigations had been cut out of the film.

"Thank you for arranging for the official review screening of the Paramount motion picture 'The Presidio,' April 21st [1988]," Baruch wrote in a letter to John Horton, the studio's liaison to the Pentagon. "This will confirm the comments expressed afterwards. The Army officially is quite satisfied and pleased with the outcome. The Air Force and ourselves [the DOD], however, are disappointed about the agreed upon scene involving the Air Force OSI, although filmed, not being used in the picture."

So if the producers weren't going to use the OSI scene, Baruch told Horton, "looping the track will be expected to clarify that the pilot is not Air Force and that the flight was a contract one."

So to satisfy the air force, the producers had to "loop" a few words over dialogue they'd already shot with the pilot—like they would to dub English over a foreign-language film—so that the pilot now tells Caldwell that the flight was a "contract flight," meaning that the plane that brought in the smuggled diamonds was not on official air force business. And if you look closely, you will see that when the pilot says the words "contract flight," the words don't match the movement of his lips.



Don Baruch, who headed up the Pentagon's film office for forty years, was a humorless, straight-laced Victorian gentleman who didn't like to see or hear cussing in movies. (Photo by Lawrence Suid)

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# ★ CHAPTER 21 ★

## CENSORSHIP

### THE FINAL FRONTIER

The Pentagon didn't like the original script for *Star Trek IV*. Don Baruch, the longtime head of the Pentagon's film office, didn't think it cast the navy in a very positive light. He thought the script made navy shore patrolmen look like buffoons, and that it depicted lax security onboard a nuclear aircraft carrier. The 1986 film, which many fans of the *Star Trek* movies remember as being "the one about the whales," would not be made with the Pentagon's assistance unless some serious changes were made to the script.

"A recommendation for not supporting the movie 'Star Trek IV' was forwarded to the Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense, Public Affairs, yesterday," the navy said in an internal memo. "Mr. Don Baruch of OASD [PA] has indicated to the producer that DOD would likely concur with that recommendation as the script reflects nothing of benefit to the government or the service, is uncomplimentary to the military and deals with the penetration of a military nuclear storage site in the San Francisco area. The latter scenes portray an extremely lax security system for nuclear storage maintained by the 20th Century Navy."

Harve Bennett, the film's producer, was stunned by the Pentagon's reaction. The modern American navy had always been the model for the starship fleet and command depicted in the *Star Trek* television shows and films, and the producers had always been respectful of Starfleet Command's twentieth-century antecedent. And besides, Bennett, the producer



of such classic TV schlock as *The Mod Squad*, *The Six Million Dollar Man*, and *The Bionic Woman*, considered himself a patriot and a strong supporter of the armed forces. Indeed, a few years later, the Department of Defense would bestow one of its highest honors on him. In the 1990s, Bennett would serve for eight years as California's civilian aide to the secretary of the U.S. Army, and in recognition of his work on behalf of the National Committee to Commemorate the Fiftieth Anniversary of World War II, the Department of Defense awarded him the Outstanding Civilian Service Medal, the DOD's second-highest civilian decoration.

Bennett had worked with Baruch and the navy once before—in the 1970s on a TV movie for ABC called *Family Flight*. He'd shot part of the movie-of-the-week aboard the USS *Ranger*, and now he wanted the navy to let him use the aircraft carrier again for *Star Trek IV*. So on January 8, 1986, Bennett sent a videotape of *Family Flight* to the navy to remind them of their past association. He also included a pitch letter asking them to help him make *Star Trek IV*.

"The enclosed cassette was made in the mid-seventies as an ABC movie-of-the-week," he told the navy in his pitch letter. "It is a long way from outer space, but I think it will demonstrate the bond of respect and affection I have for the United States Navy."

A few weeks later, he sent a similar pitch letter to Baruch at the Pentagon.

"I write to you with fond memories of a similar letter I wrote to you in the early '70's at which time your Department approved filming aboard the U.S.S. *Ranger* resulting in the successful movie of the week, 'Family Flight,' which is still being shown on television today," Bennett told Baruch. "Many years have passed and I have graduated to the big screen. But I feel like I am coming home when I make the following formal request. On behalf of Paramount Pictures and the makers of 'Star Trek' we are requesting Department of Navy and Department of Defense cooperation on the motion picture 'Star Trek IV.' Specifically, we are requesting permission to film aboard U.S.S. *Ranger* in port San Diego for three days, February 25–28. . . . 'Star Trek IV' will be released in December of 1986, marking the 20th anniversary of this unique TV/motion picture phenomenon. The year is also the 75th anniversary of Naval Aviation and, by happy coincidence, also the 75th anniversary of Paramount Pictures."

But Baruch still didn't like the script, and "happy coincidence" or not, it would have to be changed, even though Baruch acknowledged in an internal memo that "overall assistance will not be extensive."

Realizing he was in a tough spot, Bennett contacted John Horton, the legendary middleman between Hollywood and the Pentagon, who arranged a meeting with the head of the navy's Information Office to discuss a rewrite of the script.

"While derogatory dialogue referring to military is an easy fix," the navy said in a memo in advance of the meeting with Horton, "the scenes depicting incursion into a Navy nuclear storage facility in San Francisco will remain a problem. Unless otherwise directed, the (Navy Office of Information) intends to recommend rewrite to reflect incursion into a civilian nuclear reactor facility rather than a military facility."

Bennett, however, didn't want to shoot his film at a civilian nuclear reactor. Part of the scene's payoff was that the nuclear aircraft carrier they would be breaking into would be the USS *Enterprise*—the namesake for the Starship *Enterprise* commanded by Adm. James T. Kirk. The real *Enterprise* was out to sea and was unavailable to the producers, but the USS *Ranger* would do just fine as a stand-in.

So if he was going to get to shoot on the *Ranger*, Bennett knew he was going to have to change the script.

*Star Trek IV: The Long Voyage Home*, which is widely considered to be one of the best in the *Star Trek* franchise, tells the story of the crew of the Starship *Enterprise* voyaging back in time to modern-day San Francisco to retrieve a pair of humpback whales. The fate of the world hangs on the mission, but the trip back in time has depleted their ship's power supply. So Mr. Spock comes up with the idea of raiding a twentieth-century nuclear aircraft carrier, siphoning off some of its nuclear energy with a high-tech gadget called a Tricorder, and bringing it back to restore power to their own ship. Admiral Kirk likes the idea and sends Commanders Chekov and Uhura out on the dangerous raiding mission.

In the original screenplay, cowritten by Bennett and Nicholas Meyer, from a story by Steve Meerson and Peter Krikes, Chekov and Uhura sneak up to the perimeter of a naval base in Oakland where the aircraft carrier USS *Enterprise* is docked. Chekov and Uhura wait until night, carefully avoiding trip wires and hiding from sentries and searchlights. Firing his phaser, Chekov silently cuts a hole in the fence, and they're in.

Moving like trained commandos, they scurry aboard the ship, making their way to the nuclear reactor compartment where they encounter a sign: "Fissional Materials—No Unauthorized Entry."

"As they watch," the script reads, "we see an authorized entry: a Naval officer approaches, takes out a plastic card and slips it into a slot. A heavy door opens and he enters. Chekov aims the Tricorder at the blockhouse."

But there is too much lead shielding in the walls for the device to collect the needed radiation.

"No good," Chekov says. "We have to get inside."

A few minutes later, the heavy door opens and the officer who went in reemerges. Chekov and Uhura look at each other, nod, and move out separately.

Stepping out of the shadows, Uhura addresses the startled officer. "Evening," she says.

"Who are you?" he says, unholstering his pistol. "Freeze!"

Just then, Chekov blasts him with his stun gun. The officer falls peacefully to the floor, and they drag him out of the scene. A few minutes later, the script says, we see: "Chekov, dressed not quite right in naval uniform, followed by Uhura. At door, he slides the plastic card into its slot. They enter."

Before them is a long dark corridor with a light at the end. They move toward the light, and at the end of the hallway come upon a sentry who is looking at a video display monitor.

Not looking up and thinking Chekov the officer, the sentry says: "You back, Commander? Wanna bet on the Rams game?" Now he turns to see the uniformed man standing in front of him. The script reads: "He suddenly looks very confused as he reads Chekov's face and—ZAP—that is the expression he freezes with and drops behind the desk."

In the next scene we see Chekov and Uhura enter the Spent Rod Vault, where the ship's nuclear waste is stored.

"They see what they want," the script reads. "Uhura stands guard with the phaser while Chekov sets up the Tricorder. This time its lights beam brightly and the whine is steadier. They smile grimly. After a moment, Uhura checks a reading."

"It's collecting so slowly!" she says with a frown.

"Because of the insulation," Chekov replies. "Too much lead."

“How long?” Uhura asks, looking around nervously.

“Hours,” Chekov says, shaking his head, sighing.

Several hours later, Chekov and Uhura finish collecting the radiation and make their way out of the ship and back to the fence. The first fallen sentry, however, is beginning to come out of his stun. He staggers to his feet and sounds the alarm. Sirens wail.

“Go!” Chekov says to Uhura, handing her the Tricorder. “You must get through.”

Searchlights pick him up. Uhura, still in the shadows, slips through the hole in the fence. Sailors appear from everywhere and chase Chekov. She gets out safely, but he is captured.

In the next scene, Chekov is being interrogated in a holding cell. Three men are present—two men dressed in civilian clothes, and a Naval Intelligence Officer (NIO), who does all the questioning. Chekov’s accent clearly makes him a Russian, but they’re not getting any answers from him, as he sticks to telling them only his name, rank, and serial number.

“All right, Commander Chekov, you wanna tell us anything?” asks the frustrated NIO.

“Like what?” Chekov replies.

“Like who you really are and what you’re doing here and what this thing is,” says the NIO, pointing to Chekov’s phaser, which is lying on the desk in front of him.

After some more frustrating attempts to get some information out of Chekov, the NIO turns to one of the civilians and asks: “What do you think?”

“He’s a Russkie,” the civilian replies.

“No kidding,” the NIO says sarcastically. “He may be a Russkie, all right, but he’s a retard or something.”

While they huddle, Chekov grabs the phaser. “Don’t move,” he says, pointing it at them. He tells the three men to lie down on the floor, and they follow his order. Chekov then opens the door and escapes, but as he is running down the corridor, a shot rings out.

Outside, still crouching in the shadows, Uhura hears the shot and sees the commotion as Chekov is carried off the ship and placed in an ambulance. She hears that they are taking him to Mercy Hospital, so she hurries back to tell Admiral Kirk.

She finds Kirk and Spock in San Francisco, and after handing Kirk the radiation-filled Tricorder, Kirk asks her: “Where’s Chekov?”

"They shot him," she replies.

Now Kirk organizes a rescue party. He takes Bones, his trusted medical officer, and Gillian, the young whale expert they've befriended, to save Chekov, who's being held under guard at the hospital. The rescue party arrives at the hospital—Gillian lying flat on a gurney and Kirk and Bones, dressed as doctors, pushing her through the hallway. They roll her up to Chekov's room, which is guarded by two navy shore patrolmen. Kirk tries to push the gurney past the guards but they block the way.

"Sorry, doctor," says one of the shore patrolmen, not letting him pass. "We have our orders."

Bones, sounding authoritative, spews out some medical gibberish, telling the navy guards they must let his patient into the operating room or she will die. Confused, the guards let them pass. Once inside the room, Bones goes to work on Chekov and quickly revives him. Gillian gets off the gurney, and Chekov gets on. Kirk, Bones, and Gillian then roll him out of the room, and as they pass the guards again, one of the shore patrolmen asks: "How's the patient?"

"He's gonna make it!" Kirk replies, as they hustle down the hallway.

"He?" says one of the puzzled shore patrolmen. "They went in with a she." As the rescue party makes its escape, the guards look at one another and make a beeline for the operating room. Once inside, they find their patient missing and sound the alarm. The rescue party takes an elevator and makes it to the roof with the shore patrolmen and hospital security in hot pursuit. Just in time, Sulu lands a stolen helicopter on the roof, and they quickly place Chekov onboard. Gillian and Bones climb in, but just then, the shore patrolmen burst onto the roof.

"Stop or we shoot!" shouts one of the shore patrolmen.

Kirk has no choice: He aims and zaps the shore patrolman with a phaser shot. This unhinges the rest of the pursuers, who freeze in their tracks long enough to allow the rescue party to escape.

The real navy, however, wasn't going to help the producers of *Star Trek IV* unless they made some major changes in these scenes. The navy didn't want the movie to show Chekov and Uhura breaking into a nuclear aircraft carrier; or to show navy sentries being overpowered by Chekov and Uhura; or to show Chekov outwitting a Naval Intelligence Officer; or to show sailors shooting Chekov; or to show navy shore patrolmen dis-

obeying orders and allowing Kirk and the rescue party past their post at the hospital; or to show the navy guards letting Kirk escape after he zaps one of them with his phaser; or to show a shore patrolman so frightened at the sight of another patrolman being zapped by Kirk's phaser that he lets them all escape. They thought it made the navy look bad, and it would all have to be changed if the producers wanted the navy's cooperation.

"One part of the original script that we didn't care for was their breaking into the facility, where they stealthfully got past security," recalls R. Adm. Jack A. Garrow, the navy's chief of information when *Star Trek IV* was being filmed. "Beaming in would be acceptable, because that's fantasy. In the original script, they didn't have enough power to do the beaming process, but after we suggested changes in the script, they had enough to beam in but not beam out."

So now in the movie, Chekov and Uhura simply beam into the reactor room. That way, the audience will not get the idea that anyone from the twenty-third century armed with phasers and Tricorders could break into a heavily guarded nuclear aircraft carrier and steal some of its radioactive energy.

But that wasn't all the navy wanted changed.

When Chekov is captured, it's no longer a Naval Intelligence Officer or anyone else from the navy who's interrogating him and then letting him get away. The navy thought that would make them look stupid. That would also have to be changed. So now in the movie, it's an FBI agent who does the questioning and who lets Chekov escape.

And the navy didn't want Chekov being shot by navy security guards, either. After all, Chekov was on a mission to save the planet, and shooting him would make the navy look like the bad guys. So the script was rewritten, and instead of being shot, Chekov now injures himself during his attempted escape when he tries to jump off the ship and into the water, but lands instead on a floating barge and is knocked unconscious.

And the navy didn't want the navy shore patrolmen who are guarding Chekov's hospital room to be seen as disregarding orders when Kirk, Bones, and Gillian show up at the hospital to rescue him. So the script was rewritten, and instead of navy shore patrolmen being posted outside Chekov's hospital room and blowing their assignment, the characters have been rewritten as San Francisco policemen.

And the navy didn't want Kirk to be seen zapping a navy shore

patrolman on the roof of the hospital, scaring the other shore patrolman so badly that he let them get away. This scene was also rewritten so that instead of zapping the navy guard in order to make their escape aboard a waiting helicopter, Kirk and the rescue party are simply beamed aboard their own ship just as the security guards are about to capture them.

“The producers were most cooperative,” recalls R. Admiral Garrow.



Leonard Nimoy directs a scene from *Star Trek IV: The Voyage Home*. The Pentagon demanded numerous script changes in return for its cooperation. (Photo courtesy of USMC)

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# ★ CHAPTER 22 ★

## ALMOST SUNK BY THE NAVY

Mace Neufeld took the elevator up to the office of the assistant secretary of the navy. He was shooting a movie downstairs in the lobby of the Pentagon and now he was on his way upstairs to try to get the navy to cooperate with him on his next film. It would not be an easy sell, and without the navy's assistance his next film project would be dead in the water. And the fact that the movie he was currently shooting in the Pentagon's lobby—*No Way Out*—depicted the secretary of defense as a murderer, and a navy officer as a Russian spy, didn't help matters much.

And if that wasn't bad enough, the Pentagon brass was already mad at him for shooting *No Way Out* in their lobby. They'd told him that he couldn't shoot there, and that they wouldn't provide any assistance to the film because of its subject matter. But he'd pulled a fast one on them. His location manager, Stuart Neuman, had found a loophole in their rules.

Most people don't know this, but the Pentagon doesn't actually own the five-sided building it's housed in; it's actually run by the General Services Administration (GSA). Neuman found this out a few months earlier, in the spring of 1984, while scouting locations for *No Way Out*. He'd called a guy he knew at the GSA and asked him if they could shoot at the Pentagon, even though the Pentagon had said no.

"We control all of the public space at the Pentagon—everything but the actual offices," the guy at the GSA told him.



So he called Dale Bruce, the GSA's head of public affairs, and said: "Dale, I'd like to shoot a film at the Pentagon. Do you require script approval?"

"No," Bruce relied.

And that was that. As long as they confined their filming to the Pentagon's public areas, they could shoot *No Way Out* in the Pentagon, whether the Pentagon brass liked it or not.

But that wouldn't help Neufeld now as he got off the elevator to go meet the assistant secretary of the navy to try to talk him into helping Neufeld make his next picture, *The Hunt for Red October*.

Tom Clancy's best-selling novel about a Russian submarine captain who defects to the United States was having a difficult time making its way to the big screen. The novel—Clancy's first—got a huge boost in sales when newspapers around the country printed a photograph of Pres. Ronald Reagan getting off Air Force One with a copy of the book tucked under his arm. The president told reporters that it was "a great yarn" and "non-put-downable."

This was great for the book's sales, but it could have posed a major problem for Neufeld, who at that very moment was locked in negotiations with Clancy for the film rights. Neufeld feared that Clancy, sensing that the president's endorsement would help make his book a runaway best-seller—which it did—might now try to play hardball with him. But Clancy was cool. He didn't try to jack up the price, and he made a deal with the producer along the lines of the deal they'd originally discussed.

But Reagan's endorsement of the book didn't mean anything in Hollywood. Every studio in town would eventually turn it down—even MGM, where Neufeld had a "first-look" deal that gave the studio the first bid on any of his movie projects. So in 1984, Neufeld called his old friend Ned Tanen, who was then head of production at Universal Pictures. Tanen was getting ready to fly to England later that same day, so Neufeld coyly offered to help him pass the time on the long flight.

"Got any scripts to read? Or books?" he asked.

"No," Tanen replied.

"Then let me send you over this book, *The Hunt for Red October*."

Tanen laughed. "Why, Mace? We already turned that down."

Neufeld was undaunted. "Ned, a reader turned it down," he said.

“Why don’t *you* read this book, and if you don’t think this can be a terrific movie, you never have to take another call from me.”

Tanen laughed again at the producer’s persistence and finally agreed to read the book on the plane.

The flight was long and Tanen was tired when the plane landed at Heathrow Airport outside of London. But when he got to his hotel, the first thing he did was call Neufeld back in California.

“You were right,” he told Neufeld. “This is a great story. But it’s going to cost a fortune to make.”

Neufeld thought fast. “No it’s not,” he said, making up a number and throwing it out to the studio boss. “It’s only going to cost \$18 million. I think we can do it for that with the navy’s cooperation.”

“Have you got navy cooperation?” Tanen asked.

“No,” Neufeld replied truthfully.

“Well, unless you can get navy cooperation on this movie, you’re not going to be able to make this movie,” Tanen stated flatly.

Neufeld agreed. Without the navy—and the use of a real nuclear submarine—it would be impossible to bring the film in anywhere near the \$18 million he’d promised. So when Tanen got back from London, he and Neufeld sat down and wrote up a contract that included navy cooperation as a deal breaker.

So now, as Neufeld got off the elevator and walked into the assistant secretary of the navy’s office, he knew it was do or die. And it was almost die.

“I went up there and the assistant secretary of the navy was very gung-ho about it,” Neufeld recalls. “He loved the book. But the guy sitting next to me was the head of submarine warfare, and there was not a peep from him. Not a peep. So finally, the assistant secretary of the navy says to him, ‘So, what do you think?’ And he says, ‘Well, I liked the book. It’s a great yarn. But we’re the Silent Service. I don’t see any reason why we should get involved in this book. I don’t think so.’”

And that was that. Neufeld left the meeting downcast. “My heart dropped right to the soles of my shoes, because if I didn’t get navy cooperation, this thing was all over,” he recalls. “I was down in the dumps.”

That would all change three weeks later when the phone rang at Neufeld’s office at MGM. It was John Horton, his military consultant, calling from Washington, DC.

"I got a call from the navy," Horton told Neufeld. "They would like to invite you to take a cruise on the *Rickover*, to do some research."

Neufeld was elated. The USS *Hyman G. Rickover* was the navy's newest nuclear sub—and he knew now that it was his.

"Apparently, the secretary of the navy had done a real job on the head of Submarine Command," Neufeld surmised.

A few months later, after he'd finished shooting *No Way Out* at the Pentagon, Neufeld and his screenwriter on *The Hunt for Red October* went on a six-day cruise in the North Atlantic on the *Rickover*, gathering material for their next movie. To show that there were no hard feelings, when the filmmakers came onboard, all the officers were wearing nametags identical to the names of the officers in the book. Two days out on the cruise, the sub's commander, Jay Cohen, even chased a Russian submarine for them, replicating a scene in the book.

"They're easy to find," Cohen told the producer about Russian subs. "They sound like garbage trucks."

But Neufeld's problems weren't over yet. After the writer completed the first draft of his script, Neufeld sent it to the Pentagon, expecting a quick okay. But he was wrong. The navy wanted major changes in the script, and they wanted to help rewrite it.

"The Navy's concern regarding 'The Hunt for Red October' script is that it is shallow," wrote J. B. Finkelstein, the navy's chief of information, in a memo to Don Baruch, head of the Pentagon's film office. "Paramount is obviously relying heavily on visuals to carry the picture. The script does not do justice to the detailed character and plot development of Tom Clancy's novel."

To help fix these plot and character flaws, Finkelstein sent along three pages of proposed script changes, detailing line by line what the navy wanted. The first two pages dealt mostly with inaccuracies in the script's use of navy jargon and submarine protocol. Those would be easy fixes. But the five issues raised on the last page of the navy memo would be more problematic.

The navy wanted the screenwriter to punch up the characters of the two submarine captains—the defecting Russian skipper, played by Sean Connery, and the American skipper, played by Scott Glenn. They wanted the script to give the Russian skipper a better reason for defecting; to explain the Russian captain's bitterness about the death of his wife at the

hands of incompetent Soviet surgeons, and for the two captains to show a greater sense of respect for one another.

"There is insufficient explanation in the script to explain or justify the Soviet defection," the navy said in its memo. "There is insufficient development of the tremendous professional respect and admiration between Mancuso [the American skipper] and Ramius [the Russian skipper]. This could be easily developed by a little dialogue. The cause of death of Ramius' wife is insufficiently explained. There is no explanation regarding the Soviet distrust of Lithuanians. Closing dialogue regarding reason for Ramius' defection is vague and confusing."

Baruch passed the navy's memo on to John Horton, who relayed it to Neufeld.

"Your attention is invited to the last page which outlines more generalized areas than the accuracy items on the first two pages," Baruch said in his letter to Horton. "We look forward to receiving changes before finalizing script approval and trust all the items of the enclosed memorandum are addressed."

In their public pronouncements, Pentagon officials insist that they steer clear of telling filmmakers how to tell their stories. Yes, the film must help recruitment, give the public a better understanding of the military, and be accurate in its depiction of military life. But they don't interfere with creative decisions. At least, that's what they say.

But behind closed doors, Pentagon officials routinely tell producers not only what to take out of their scripts, but what to put in.

After reviewing the navy's suggested script changes, John McTiernan, the film's director, wrote a letter to the head of the navy's office of information in Los Angeles, saying that he would make every change the navy asked for.

"With respect to the last five items of the memo," McTiernan wrote, "the most candid thing I can say is that we agree with you and share your concerns. We are working on clarifying these points. Specifically, with respect to explaining the defection, we are going to attempt to place the story in the past—prior to Gorbachev's ascension. We will also strive to improve the relationship between Mancuso and Ramius in terms of their mutual professional respect and admiration for each other. We will clarify

the explanation of the death of Ramius' wife as much as possible. Our notion is that her death was not the cause of the defection, but merely a release which made defection possible. Cramming in a long exposition regarding drunk surgeons and their political convictions is difficult. In addition, it would trivialize and add a bitter note to Ramius' actions. The Soviet distrust of Lithuanians will be clarified as will the closing dialogue regarding the reasons for the defection.

"We look forward to a continuing and productive relationship with the Navy and thank you for your great support and cooperation."

McTiernan and Neufeld would get all the cooperation they wanted, and their film turned out to be a huge box office hit, grossing nearly \$200 million worldwide, making it the sixth biggest picture of 1990. And better yet for Neufeld, it launched a franchise of films he produced based on Tom Clancy novels, including *Patriot Games*, *Clear and Present Danger*, and *The Sum of All Fears*.

But *The Hunt for Red October* almost didn't get made because one admiral didn't think it would be good for the Silent Service. And it wouldn't have been made at all if Neufeld and McTiernan hadn't agreed to make every change the navy requested.

# ★ CHAPTER 23 ★

## TURNING MOVIES INTO RECRUITING POSTERS

The Pentagon liked the script for *The Right Stuff*, which told an off-beat story about the early days of the American space program. There were lots of military heroes in the film, and lots of military hardware. And it would be great for recruiting. “The production promises to benefit Navy recruiting efforts,” the navy said in an internal memo dated February 25, 1982. This unsigned document is from the Chief of Naval Operations (CNO), Washington, to the Commander-in-Chief, U.S. Pacific Fleet (CIC PAC FLT).

But if the film were to reach the Pentagon’s prime recruiting demographic, then the foul language present throughout the original script would have to be toned down considerably.

After reading the first draft of the screenplay in June 1980, Col. Donald Burggrabe, chief of public affairs for the air force in Los Angeles, wrote a letter to the film’s producers expressing his concern that unless the foul language was cleaned up, the film would receive an “R” rating, meaning that no one under seventeen would be admitted unless accompanied by a parent.

“The obscene language used seems to guarantee an ‘R’ rating,” Colonel Burggrabe wrote. “If distributed as an ‘R’ it cuts down on the teenage audience, which is a prime one to the military services when our recruiting goals are considered.”

The language was cleaned up, and when the film was released in 1983, it got a “PG” rating.

And that's what moviemaking is all about for the Pentagon—putting positive images of the military on the screen so that kids will like what they see and join up one day.

The Pentagon makes no bones about why it provides assistance to pro-military movies, or about why it withholds that assistance from films that portray the military in a negative light.

Phil Strub leans back in his chair at his Pentagon office and explains why the military provides assistance to certain films and TV shows.

"There's no question that we do things to influence public opinion and to help recruiting and retention," he says. "There are no statistics to show a causal relationship, but there [are] tons of anecdotal evidence. I think there is a consensus of opinion that it does work."

By that, he means that positive military portrayals in movies tend to increase recruitment.

Positive portrayals of the military in movies also boost morale, and when servicemen and women are happy, they tend to stay in the military longer. "Morale ties into retention," he says. "It takes a lot of money to recruit and train people and it takes a lot of money to retain them. The taxpayer is burdened with the considerable cost of recruiting people and of retaining people, and to the extent that we can foster good morale about staying in the military, or joining the military, that's a way that we can save the taxpayer money."

The military's use of mainstream movies to serve as recruiting tools was also detailed in a June 21, 1996, letter to film director Michael Canton-Jones from Maj. Nancy LaLuntas, the Marine Corps' public affairs liaison officer on Canton-Jones's film *The Jackal*.

"As you are aware," she wrote, "the Defense Department authorizes cooperation with filmmakers when it is determined to be beneficial to the Armed Forces or DOD. We generally seek projects that might enhance public understanding of the military and its roles and missions, or have some recruiting value."

Hollywood movie studios are well aware of the fact that the military manipulates movies to boost recruiting, and many studio executives try to make deals with the Pentagon with that in mind.

In March of 1990, Paramount executive Jeffrey A. Coleman came up with a brilliant idea to save the studio several million dollars while giving

a boost to navy recruiting when it came time for two of the studio's blockbusters to be released into the home video market. The films were *The Hunt for Red October*, which told the story of CIA agent Jack Ryan pursuing a defecting Russian submarine commander, and *Flight of the Intruder*, a movie about the navy's heroic efforts to save a downed navy flyer in Bosnia. *The Hunt For Red October* was in theaters at the time, and *Flight of the Intruder* was still in production. Both films had received the navy's full cooperation, and each film was in debt to the navy for more than \$1 million in direct costs that the navy had spent in supporting their production.

But Coleman, who was Paramount's executive director of production administration and product placement, had an idea that might kill two birds with one stone.

In a pitch letter to then secretary of defense (now vice president) Dick Cheney, Coleman wrote: "It was generally accepted by the Navy and the Department of Defense in approving the assistance for these productions that each of these films should 'enhance recruiting and retention programs' in keeping with [DOD regulations]. This view has been substantiated by senior U.S. Navy officials after screening 'The Hunt for Red October' with regard to the Submarine Service. It is considered that the same positive recruiting results for naval aviation will also be achieved with the release of 'Flight of the Intruder' in July of this year."

And the home videos of the two films, he told Cheney, would reach even more potential recruits.

"Paramount Pictures Home Video division will release into the market approximately 400,000 video cassettes of 'The Hunt for Red October' in October, 1990, and depending upon the theatrical performance, a similar number of cassettes for 'Flight of the Intruder' in December, 1990," he told Cheney. "Current statistical data from the home video marketplace indicates that a major video cassette release will be rented a minimum of 75 times. Extrapolating the average household audience, including a diverse age group, would project a potential reach of 30 million viewers over a six-to-eight week period. This experience could be duplicated for 'Flight of the Intruder,' assuming a box office level similar to that of 'The Hunt for Red October.'

"The demographics for this project show that we will have a strong percentage of viewers in the 15 to 19 age group, which presumably would



be the correct target audience for the Navy. In addition, the parents who see these films will be favorably impressed and supportive of the Navy recruiting content. Considering both the quality of the audience and the potential for a minimum of 60 million unduplicated impressions, the recruiting benefits for the video release will be of major significance, with particular emphasis on the high priority targets concerning recruits for nuclear power and aviation roles in the Navy.”

And to “further enhance” the films’ recruiting value, Coleman proposed to Cheney that in exchange for a \$1 million discount on each film’s debt to the navy, the studio would place a ninety-second navy recruitment ad at the beginning of each movie that would soon be coming out on home video. As part of the deal, Coleman also wanted the navy to put up another \$3 million for each film to purchase television commercial time to promote the ninety-second recruiting ads.

In his March 3, 1990, letter to Cheney, slugged “PARAMOUNT PICTURES CORPORATION UNSOLICITED PROPOSAL FOR NAVY RECRUITING,” Coleman wrote: “Paramount Pictures proposes that to further enhance the recruiting opportunities inherent in the home video media, it will offer an incorporation of a specialized recruiting message in each video cassette produced for home video for ‘The Hunt for Red October’ and ‘Flight of the Intruder.’ These messages would be customized productions for the videocassettes not to exceed 90 seconds in length. They will be placed at the beginning of each cassette before the copyright warning message.”

The DOD liked the idea of the recruiting ads, but thought that the \$1 million Paramount was asking to place the ads on the home videos of each movie was way out of the ballpark. And there was no way that the DOD was going to spend \$6 million to advertise the ads on TV—taxpayer money that would essentially be promoting a private endeavor.

Responding to Coleman’s letter, Dr. W. Steve Sellman, director for Accession Policy, office of the assistant secretary of defense, wrote: “Obviously, a Navy recruiting message on your video tape would have some impact on the home viewer, and therefore would have some value to the Navy. However, we have estimated that value for the combined total of both movies to be in the neighborhood of \$75,000 to \$100,000.

“In addition, the expenditure of U.S. government appropriated funds to advertise a commercial project is prohibited by federal law. Therefore,

we cannot entertain your \$6 million proposal with regard to advertising your two movies.

“Should you desire to discuss the placement of a Navy advertisement on ‘The Hunt for Red October’ video at the costs we have outlined, and to make outtakes from the film available to us as the Navy previously requested, please contact Captain Robert Kelly.”

The DOD didn’t tell Paramount, but it based its decision to reject Paramount’s proposal on an assessment performed by Grey Advertising, one of the top ad agencies in the country that creates many of the regular recruiting ads for the armed forces. In his written assessment of the Paramount proposal, Grey Advertising senior vice president Robert A. Ravitz, a former rear admiral in the navy, told the Pentagon: “At the risk of being blunt, we think this proposal is a wonderful deal for Paramount and a terrible deal for the Defense Department or the Navy. . . . Both movies are already wonderful recruiting tools for the military, particularly the Navy, and to add a recruiting commercial onto the head of what is already a two-hour recruiting commercial is redundant.”

The military was also quick to realize the recruiting value of *Behind Enemy Lines*, a film released in 2001 that tells the story of a navy navigator, played by Owen Wilson, who gets shot down in Bosnia, and the heroic efforts of a navy admiral, played by Gene Hackman, to rescue him.

The film’s producer, John Davis, describes the film as “*Top Gun* meets *The Fugitive*.” Davis says that films like *Behind Enemy Lines* and *Top Gun* have extraordinary recruiting value for the military.

“*Top Gun* was a recruiting video for the navy,” he says. “It really helped their recruiting. People saw the movie and said, ‘Wow! I want to be a pilot.’ You create these images and young men pick them up and they become important images for them. They want to imitate them.”

Asked if he thought that *Behind Enemy Lines* would have similar recruiting value for the navy, Davis says: “I think so. The movie should do for them what they thought it would: to show a brand-new generation that being a pilot is really fantastic, unless you get shot down. This isn’t your dad’s military. This is what it’s like today. There are a tremendous number of high-tech elements that go into how warfare is waged today. The movie is state-of-the-art. I think in this computer age, it’s hard not to look at this movie, and at the end of the day, find this an exciting, heroic life-challenge.”

Davis also admits that numerous script changes were made on *Behind Enemy Lines* to accommodate the military. "They are always sensitive about the way the military is portrayed, about the correctness of language, about how behavior fits an officer's behavior," he says. "You just have to go and negotiate it. There were a lot of language changes, the way people spoke, certain changes about how the chain of command works. They don't want you to embarrass the military if you're going to use their stuff."

No doubt the biggest boost ever for navy recruiting was Paramount's 1986 blockbuster *Top Gun*, starring Tom Cruise as a cocky naval aviator. Indeed, the navy liked the film so much that navy recruiters set up recruiting booths inside some theaters that were showing the film. According to the navy, recruitment of young men wanting to become naval aviators went up 500 percent after the film was released.

"These kids came out of the movie with eyes as big as saucers and said, 'Where do I sign up?'" says Maj. David Georgi, the army's public affairs officer on numerous films and television shows.

Ironically, a sequel to *Top Gun* never got made, Major Georgi says, because the navy thought it might hurt recruiting. Paramount was developing a script for *Top Gun II*, but before it could go into production, the navy was rocked by a scandal that made the drinking and womanizing in *Top Gun* no longer something the navy wanted to brag about. The Tailhook scandal occurred in 1991 at the Las Vegas Hilton Hotel, where hundreds of navy pilots took part in the molestation and mauling of eighty-seven women. The scandal made front-page news all over the country.

"The navy loved *Top Gun* because it helped with recruiting like crazy," says Major Georgi. "Paramount went to the navy and said, 'Let's make *Top Gun II*.' But after Tailhook, the navy said, 'Get the hell out of here.' In *Top Gun*, Tom Cruise bedded his instructor and drank heavily. The navy did not need that image portrayed again after Tailhook."

In 1997, air force recruiters saw an opportunity to boost recruitment by assisting the production and marketing of Columbia Pictures' *Air Force One*.

"Movie theaters in particular will be interested in having military equipment and uniformed personnel on hand when showing 'Air Force One' in their theaters," an internal air force memo said. "Exposing movie goers to the USAF is permissible; providing we do not appear to be endorsing the movie as a commercial product, i.e. encouraging people to

purchase tickets to see it. Being able to mount equipment or recruitment displays in movie theater parking lots; recruitment literature in places people congregate—movie theater lobbies with the permission of their management—and/or airing public service announcements in conjunction with the film's showings or advertisements are allowable."

But the Pentagon doesn't cooperate with filmmakers only to show positive images of military life to potential young recruits. Taxpayers, who foot the bill for the Pentagon's budget, are also targeted. And according to Major Georgi, the Pentagon also targets Congress.

"We want to show the Congress what we can do," he says. "Obviously, a movie is not always 100 percent factual, so when we get Congress to watch it, they see it in a favorable light, and down the road, this will help with funding."

Producer Mace Neufeld, who has made several Paramount movies with the assistance of the military, is also well aware of the recruiting value a film with positive military images can have.

"The upside for the military," Neufeld says, "is to show a proper depiction of what the armed forces are like and how they operate—and of course, anything that makes the services attractive to the taxpayers and to young people who might potentially join the armed forces. That's why they loved *Top Gun*. They liked *The Hunt for Red October* a lot. It made the Submarine Service seem very attractive."

Turning films and TV shows into commercials for the armed forces is nothing new. It's been going on for decades.

In 1955, Columbia Pictures was desperate to get the navy's assistance for a submarine story called *Take Her Down* that they wanted to produce for the still relatively new medium of television. The story was about the heroic adventures of a real-life submarine commander who was killed during World War II, and Columbia wanted the navy to let it use a submarine to shoot the movie on. The navy, however, didn't like the script and initially rejected the studio's request for assistance, saying that the project had no recruiting value for the navy.

"It does nothing to improve the public's desire to endorse their sons' participation in underwater seafaring," wrote Capt. Hal Harlan, on January 31, 1955, in a memo to Don Baruch, head of the Department of Defense's film liaison department.

The DOD's own guidelines for assisting film and TV productions state that the Pentagon will only provide assistance to shows that "provide services to the general public relating to, or enhancing, the U.S. Armed Forces' recruiting and retention programs."

The producers of *Take Her Down* would have to come up with something that *would* "improve the public's desire to endorse their sons' participation in underwater seafaring," so when the navy gave them a laundry list of script changes that would have to be made, they made every change the navy demanded. There could be no conflict between a father and son aboard the sub—check; a fight between a noncommissioned officer and one of his men would have to be deleted—check.

"The scene in which the chief takes a poke at [a sailor] will have to be changed," the navy said in an internal memo. "In the Navy, chiefs just don't hit their men."

The navy even made the studio change the name of the show from *Take Her Down* to *Standby to Dive* before giving its approval and assistance.

Hollywood and the Pentagon are both well aware that positive images of the military can have positive recruiting results. Indeed, the Pentagon's files are full of internal DOD memos and correspondence from producers detailing their collusion in making movies that will make young men and women want to enlist.

- In 1996, the producers of *Deep Impact* were seeking Pentagon assistance to make their movie about the military's efforts to destroy a comet before it can destroy Earth. The Pentagon liked the script—provided some changes were made—and agreed to provide assistance. "This production depicts a feasible interpretation of military operations and policies, and additionally, will enhance U.S. Army recruiting and retention programs," the army's public affairs office said in an internal memo.
- In 1994, Hollywood Pictures, a subsidiary of the Walt Disney Company, wanted the army's assistance in producing a movie called *In the Army Now*, which was to star Pauly Shore as a Generation X slacker who joins the army reserves and becomes a better man. The army doesn't usually like to support comedies, but it was quick to see the film's potential recruiting value. "The primary audience for

the film are 13–18 year-olds,” wrote Lt. Col. Mitchell Marovitz, chief of the army’s public affairs office in Los Angeles, in an internal memo dated January 21, 1994. “The script depicts a film which has the potential to support Army reserve recruiting efforts.”

- The Department of Defense declined to give its full cooperation to *A Few Good Men* in 1992 because, according to the Phil Strub, “there were no good men” in the movie, which starred Tom Cruise as a navy attorney prosecuting Marines who had killed a fellow Marine at the naval base in Guantanamo, Cuba. But that didn’t stop the Marine Corps from trying to get some recruiting mileage out of the film. “Recruiters and supporting organizations are encouraged to take advantage of interest generated by ‘A Few Good Men’ as long as their activities generally promote the Marine Corps rather than the film,” the DOD said in an internal memo. “Practically, recruiters can be accessible to interested individuals but should not plan, execute or participate in organized promotional events.”
- In 1989, Michael Douglas’s production company, Stonebridge Entertainment, was developing a screenplay called *Second to None* about U.S. Marines doing battle against Thai pirates. The producers, who wanted the Marines to provide several Harrier “jump jets” for the production, promised the Marines a production that they would be “proud of for years to come.” The Marine Corps, which is always happy to show off its Harriers, had high hopes for the film’s recruiting potential. “This movie is clearly written to appeal to the same audience as our recruiters are trying to motivate,” the Marine Corps said in an internal memo. “Our recruiting stations will reap the commercial success of this movie.” The Marines worked with the producers for more than two years trying to develop a script that would portray Marines Corps aviation in the best possible light, but in the end, the film was never made.
- In 1977, Charles A. Pratt, producer of *The Great Santini*, was trying to get the Marine Corps to provide the jet fighters and locations that would be needed to film the production. In his pitch letter to the Marines, Pratt, who was president of Bing Crosby Productions, told them: “I want to assure you that Bing Crosby Productions expects to make a movie which will be a credit to the Corps and boost recruiting of the right sort of men.”

- In 1976, screenwriters Thomas Hunter and Peter Powell were eager to get the navy's assistance for the movie they were writing, *The Final Countdown*, which would star Kirk Douglas as the captain of a nuclear aircraft carrier that enters a time warp and is transported back to December 1941 on the eve of the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor. They'd already gone over their script with Cdr. Pete Kressey, a fighter pilot who was doing temporary duty as the public affairs officer aboard the aircraft carrier USS *Coral Sea*, and Kressey was excited about the recruiting value of their screenplay. In his pitch letter to the Department of Defense seeking the navy's assistance, Hunter wrote: "We feel very strongly that we can give you an excellent production which will be both an exciting adventure for the public and a boon to the Navy/Marine recruiter. To quote Cdr. Kressey, 'The kids will really love this one!'"
- In 1976, the navy pulled out all the stops to assist the production of Universal Pictures' *Airport 77*, about a passenger plane that crashes at sea and has to be rescued by the navy's elite Underwater Demolition Team (UDT). The producers agreed to make numerous script changes suggested by the navy, and the end product was a successful recruiting tool for the navy. "The recruiting value of the UDT visibility being provided clearly outweighs any minor scheduling difficulties experienced by the UDT's," said the navy in an internal memo. After the film was screened for the navy, another navy memo noted: "What is seen of the Navy in 'Airport '77' is more than information, it is a textbook example of 'positive impression making.' The experience of watching 'Airport '77' is not intellectual, but emotional. The audience of this picture gains little knowledge, but experiences a great deal. And experiences last far longer in memory than fact." In other words, it was the perfect recruiting tool.
- In May of 1956, 20th Century Fox was getting ready to release *D-Day: The Sixth of June*, a big-budget World War II movie starring Robert Taylor and Richard Todd who find that they are in love with the same girl on the eve of the Normandy Invasion. A week before the film was set to open in theaters around the country on May 29, the Department of the Army's staff communications office sent a message to recruiters in Los Angeles, New York, San

Francisco, Chicago, Washington, DC, and Houston telling them to make the most of the opening. "Field installations may expect representatives of 20th Century Fox Cpl. or theater managers to request assistance at local showings," the memo said. "Showings of this motion picture should be utilized by the Army as a means of promoting enlistment in the U.S. Army. Coordinate with local recruiters."

- In 1956, Roy Rogers Enterprises, the production company formed by the popular cowboy actor, wanted to expand its horizons from westerns and produce a half-hour television series about the adventures of men aboard a U.S. nuclear submarine. In his pitch letter to the Pentagon seeking the navy's assistance, Michael T. North, an executive at the company, said: "We sincerely believe in the relative merits of such a project for two basic reasons: (1) the popularity of such a show with the American public seems certain, and (2) the accelerated recruiting and public relations for the Navy and Navy Submarine Service can be of appreciable value."
- The world premiere of *To Hell and Back*, the story of how Audie Murphy became the most decorated soldier during World War II, was set to premiere in Texas in August 1955. The Department of the Army, which gave the film its full cooperation, said in an internal memo: "Showings of this motion picture should be utilized by the Army as means of promoting interest in enlistment in the U.S. Army."
- In 1955, producer Stanley Meyer pitched the Pentagon for assistance on his upcoming TV show based on the Steve Canyon comic strip. In his letter to the Pentagon's film office, Meyer wrote: "In addition to entertaining the public, I am confident that this series will offer an opportunity to the Air Force for portrayal of many of its vital activities as well as providing educational and public relations values. There would seem little doubt that the series could be of vast value to Air Force recruiting."



Mr. Hal Polaire  
Vice President  
Executive in Charge of Production  
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Dear Hal

Thanks for sending over the first draft of "The Right Stuff." Both Dunc Wilmore and I enjoyed it very much and believe it can be made into an exciting and entertaining film.

Since I'm a short-timer with only a few weeks left in the blue suit, I'm sending along my thoughts as you suggested.

1. The obscene language used seems to guarantee an "R" rating. If distributed as an "X," it cuts down on the teenage audience which is a prime one to the military services when our recruiting goals are considered. Also, it tends to negate somewhat the overall positive impression of military leadership.
2. The hypoxia sequence between Chambliss and Shepherd is a little too pat and cutesy, in my opinion. Hypoxia is a dangerous situation and it's doubtful that Chambliss would have been so nonchalant, nor, if he was that far gone, would have recovered so quickly. Some technical revisions should be incorporated to make this scene more realistic.
3. Shepherd's line, "Help me find his head...." should be changed to something less gross.
4. The scene on sperm testing, even if true, is out of place and should be deleted. It adds little, if anything, to the story.
5. In the scene where Glenn is telling them to "keep your pants zipped," he comes across more as a commanding officer, rather than a preacher. I don't think he'd try to order his peers around in a demanding tone; he'd be more persuasive and less a dictatorial type.
6. Three pages on having to take a "pee" are overkill, I think.
7. The sequence between Vickers and Gilroy on page 97 comes across as too deceitful and dishonest. I doubt it actually happened.
8. Grissom is portrayed too cowardly and fearful in the water sequence. Also, it doesn't sound logical for him to be drowning when his suit was so buoyant, and, normally when choppers are in the area, a pararescueman jumps in the water to be with the astronaut. As we discussed at lunch, perhaps it just needs to be toned down somewhat. It's hard to believe that a test pilot with fighter combat time who had just completed a sub-orbital space flight would go "bananas" in the water, even if he couldn't swim.
9. The guest house accommodations at Patrick AFB are not as dire as written.

Hope the above is helpful when it comes time to polish the shooting script. In any event, it has been a personal and professional pleasure to work with you and get to know you. You're a true gentleman. Look me up whenever you get to Skokie.

Best wishes in your years of tennis and scuba diving in Honduras.

Sincerely

DONALD E. BURGGRADE  
Colonel, USAF  
Chief, AF Public Affairs-West Coast

Blind Copy w/script  
to SAF/PAMB  
AV Project File

Air force letter to the producers of *The Right Stuff*, dated June 24, 1980, urging them to tone down the script's language so that they will receive a 'PG' rating—and a wider teenage audience.

# ★ CHAPTER 24 ★

## “EDITORIAL CONTROL OVER THE PRODUCT”

Before there was *JAG* the TV series, there was *JAG* the movie. At least, there was supposed to be a movie, but it never got made. Back in 1989, Price Entertainment was developing a project about a murder on a Marine Corps base and the subsequent investigation and trial.

The producers had given the Pentagon a copy of the script, promising that it would show the military in a positive light. To help clear the way with the Pentagon, the producers had hired consultant John Horton, who forty years earlier, as a member of the Pentagon staff, had helped write the Pentagon's guidelines on cooperating with the film industry.

“In dealing with this subject matter there will necessarily be some controversy involving the service and the society typical to the Navy and Marine life on base,” Horton wrote in a letter to the Pentagon's film office. “However, in dealing with the subject and the crime to be solved the film resolution will be absolutely positive toward the military service.”

With these assurances, the Pentagon allowed the film's screenwriter, Dean Riesner, to take a tour of the Marine Corps base at Camp Lejeune, North Carolina, and to be briefed on the military justice system as it is implemented there.

After the visit, Lt. Col. David F. Tomskey, then head of the Marine Corps' film office in Los Angeles, wrote a letter to Maj. Gen. D. R.

Gardner, commander at Camp Lejeune, thanking him for his hospitality in hosting the filmmakers. In his letter to Gardner, dated March 20, 1989, Tomsy, who accompanied the filmmakers on their visit to Camp Lejeune, also revealed the military's real purpose in assisting filmmakers.

"From our visit, and the positive impression it created, only good things can come," Tomsy told the commander. "First, we have provided Dean with enough substantive input to virtually ensure that his screenplay will characterize the Marine Corps accurately. Second, his overall favorable impression of our Marines makes it very likely that the portrayal will be favorable as well. Finally, the hospitality shown to him, and the uniqueness of the Lejeune environment greatly improves the chances of the film being shot there. Of course, the corollary to this last possibility is that the producers will have to ask for official USMC cooperation in order to gain access, and such a request will give us editorial control over the product. In my view, this would be the ideal situation."

And there it is in black and white; in the Marine Corps' own documents. What they really want in return for the use of their stuff is "editorial control over the product." That may indeed be "the ideal situation" for the military. And it's not such a bad deal for Hollywood either. In exchange for a few snips here and a few cuts there, Hollywood is getting what amounts to a massive government subsidy of the film and TV industry.

But the American people are paying the price—not only through their tax dollars, which are being used without their knowledge to give "approved" producers access to billions of dollars worth of military equipment at virtually no cost, but also through the insertion of military propaganda and recruiting messages into their movies and TV shows.

# ★ CHAPTER 25 ★

## CHANGING *STRIPES*

When you watch a film on videocassette, a little disclaimer usually pops up on the screen before the movie starts, saying: “This Film Has Been Modified to Fit the Format of Your Screen.” You are told this obvious bit of useless information, but you aren’t told if the film has been modified by the military in an effort to get you to join the army, as was the case with *Stripes*, the screwball comedy starring Bill Murray and Harold Ramis as low-life misfits who join the army and end up becoming heroes.

Dan Goldberg, the film’s producer and cowriter, was candid about the film’s recruiting potential when he sent the script to the Pentagon asking for their assistance.

“Our intention in producing ‘Stripes’ is to make a comedy film with patriotic overtones that would hopefully have a positive effect on Army recruiting,” he wrote on September 10, 1980, in a letter to Don Baruch, head of the Pentagon’s film office.

Goldberg wanted to shoot his movie at Fort Knox, the army base in Kentucky. He wanted dozens of tanks and a C-140 transport plane. And he would need over one thousand real soldiers to work as extras in the movie. In return, he promised the army he’d make a movie they’d be proud of.

“Although there will be a certain amount of humor and parody in the film, the overall intent is not to portray the Army as a collection of aber-

rant personalities,” he wrote to Baruch. “The story is basically about how a platoon of misfits are transformed into a platoon of Army heroes. Our intention is to portray the Army as realistically and positively as possible.”

They don’t teach that in film school—that a comedy should have “a certain amount of humor and parody,” but that its “overall intent” should be to portray the military in a positive light.

The army, however, was skeptical. They weren’t sure that Goldberg would play ball. They didn’t think he’d be willing to change the script enough to make it into the kind of recruiting poster they wanted. But they were wrong.

Lt. Col. Richard Griffitts, chief of the army’s Policy and Plans Division, laid out his concerns in a memo to his superiors in the Army’s Directorate of Defense Information: “Before we could recommend supporting ‘Stripes,’” he wrote, “extensive rewrites would be necessary before the script would be acceptable and, in the process, would probably destroy the comedic intent.”

The film would have to be rewritten, literally from beginning to end.

In the original screenplay, the first image to be shown on the screen was to have been of a wacky army recruiting ad that Bill Murray is watching while getting his shoes shined. It’s this ad that gives him the idea to enlist. The army, however, didn’t think the parody of one of its recruiting ads was very funny. It would have to go.

“The recruiting ads on TV would have to be changed to a more broadly comedic style or deleted entirely,” Griffitts said in his August 28 memo.

No problem, Goldberg replied. A week later, in a letter to Baruch, he wrote: “Army Recruiting Ad: We will either use a real Army ad or drop it from the script.” (In the end, he opted to use a real recruiting ad, which is used to open the film.)

Griffitts also said that the filmmakers would have to eliminate the depiction of drug use in the barracks—and during the recruits’ graduation ceremony—if they wanted the army’s cooperation. “The scenes of never-ending supplies of drugs in the barracks would have to be changed,” he wrote.

No problem, Goldberg told the army. “All drugs and drug references will be removed from the preparation for the graduation, and the gradua-

tion ceremony itself," he wrote in his reply. In fact, drug use was eliminated from the picture altogether.

The army also wanted Goldberg to "tone down" the character of Sergeant Hulka, the drill sergeant played by Warren Oates who enjoys torturing the recruits.

Again, no problem. "Sgt. Hulka will be less sadistic in tone throughout the script," Goldberg wrote in his letter to the army. He also promised the army that he would rewrite the character of General Barnicke, who is depicted as a foul-mouthed commanding officer in the original script. "General Barnicke will be played straighter without the continuous obscenities," Goldberg assured the army. In the end, Barnicke has only a few lines—none of them played for laughs, and none of them containing any obscenities.

The army also didn't like scenes in the original script that showed Murray and his squad of misfits taking part in a combat readiness mission in Mexico. "The scenes dealing with the trip to Mexico/South America with the 'counter guerilla troops' must be rewritten to delete any reference to 'counter guerilla troops' and/or Army operations in Mexico or any other South American country," the Army memo stated.

Again, Goldberg complied. "There will be no reference . . . to 'Mexico,'" he told the army. "They will refer to the combat readiness mission as 'down south.'" In the end, this scene, although shot, was edited out of the film altogether.

The army also wanted Goldberg to eliminate a bit of dialogue in which one of the soldiers jokes about raping and pillaging. Again, Goldberg complied. "Reference to 'rape and pillage' will be deleted," he wrote.

The army had numerous other suggestions. "The sexism should be eliminated throughout the script," they wrote. "The characters of Psycho and Elmo would have to be changed to a more broadly comedic style or deleted entirely."

In the end, the army was satisfied with all the changes that Goldberg agreed to make in the script, and granted him full cooperation.

"This is to advise you officially that 'Stripes' has been approved and assistance authorized for filming at Ft. Knox," Baruch wrote in a letter dated October 30, 1980, to Sheldon Schrager, head of production at Columbia Pictures. "Mr. Goldberg has been most cooperative and

responded quickly to Army/Department of Defense requests for changes.” Indeed, Baruch was so happy with the final shooting script that he told Schrager: “If the picture is as successful as we all hope and believe it will be, remember the ending leaves it open for a sequel!”

Schrager also couldn’t have been more pleased with the studio’s collaboration with the military.

“As we discussed on the telephone,” he wrote in a letter to Baruch, dated November 10, 1980, “I really believe that ‘Stripes’ will be the ushering in of a new era of cooperation between motion picture producers—especially Columbia—and the Department of Defense. May it be that all producers are as cooperative as Ivan Reitman and Dan Goldberg are in making changes in their scripts so that it becomes feasible on everybody’s part. We realize your problems and we need your help. Together, we can make a lot of pictures that will be beneficial to all.”

Indeed, the film produced the results that both sides desired: it made a lot of money for the studio, and it increased recruiting for the army.

“I was told by the army after the movie came out that their recruiting went up after ‘Stripes,’” Goldberg says in an interview. “I don’t know if that’s a good or bad thing, by the way.”

So why did he tell the military that his “intention in producing ‘Stripes’ is to make a comedy film with patriotic overtones that would hopefully have a positive effect on Army recruiting”? Goldberg now says, “I was trying to assuage their nervousness that this would be a negative portrayal of the army.”

He also claims that the script changes demanded by the army did not hurt the film, but made it better.

“It was pretty painless,” he says of the script approval process. “They had a few suggestions on the script. They didn’t censor the script. They wanted the military scenes to be accurate to the military. We embraced the realism that they required. We felt that the more real the army was, the more comedy we could get. And as a corollary, it would probably have the feel that the army was a place to join. Not that that’s what I wanted, necessarily.”

In fact, the Pentagon’s own documents show that the army was less interested in realism and accuracy than it was in making sure that the movie portrayed the army in a positive light. No sexism in the army. No

drugs. No mistreatment of recruits. It's just a good place to start—to be all that you can be.

It would be another twenty years before Goldberg would ask the military for assistance again—this time for a comedy he produced in 2001 called *Evolution*, which starred David Duchovny as a junior college professor who battles invading space aliens. But even Goldberg couldn't change the script enough to satisfy the military this time.

The Pentagon hated the script. It made the military look ineffective, and worse, it depicted them as fools whose attempts to destroy the aliens made the situation even worse. The napalm the army dropped on the monsters, it turned out, only caused them to multiply. In the end, it was the professor who saved the day by discovering the monsters' Achilles' heel—silicon. And it was the professor, not the military, who doused the aliens with tons of silicon-based Head & Shoulders—a great piece of product placement for the shampoo company, but not exactly a ringing endorsement of the armed forces.

"They turned us down on *Evolution*," Goldberg says. "We couldn't make the changes they wanted without hurting the movie creatively. Whereas on *Stripes*, all the changes they asked for helped the movie creatively."

In fact, the Pentagon's own documents show that *Stripes* would have been a very different movie without the military's input, and probably a lot funnier—just as *Evolution* would have been a very different film if the script had been changed to meet the army's recruiting needs.

"In actuality, the producers could make [*Stripes*] without Army support," the army said in an internal memo.

Moviegoers, however, won't ever get to see *that* film.





# ★ CHAPTER 26 ★

## AN OFFICER, BUT NOT A GENTLEMAN

Thirty young naval aviation cadets, led by their foul-mouthed Marine Corps drill instructor, run along a craggy beach under dark skies singing out “Jody calls”—rhyming boot camp chants that are often vulgar, sometimes comical. The DI sings out a particularly offensive one and the cadets echo it as they run.

“Flyin’ low and feelin’ mean,  
Find a family by the stream.  
Pick off a pair and hear ’em scream,  
Cause napalm sticks to kids.”

Then, as the cadets jog through a gloomy tunnel, the DI and his cadets finish off the Jody call, the words of their sing-along song bouncing off the dank walls.

“Family of gooks are sittin’ in a ditch,  
Little baby suckin’ on his mama’s tit.  
Chemical burns don’t give a shit,  
Cause napalm sticks to kids.”

So begins the boot camp training scene in *An Officer and a Gentleman*, in which Zack Mayo, played by Richard Gere, and his fellow

cadets are pushed to their limits by Sergeant Foley, a sadistic but caring drill instructor played by Lou Gossett Jr.

The film went on to become one of the biggest box office hits of 1982. But if it had been up to the navy, the film wouldn't have been made at all. The navy, which reviewed the screenplay before the movie went into production, refused to provide assistance to the filmmakers because navy brass felt it was too vulgar—that there was too much foul language and too many steamy sex scenes between the characters played by Gere and Debra Winger.

"The language is atrocious," the navy said in an internal memo.

"'Officer and a Gentleman' is profane and morally objectionable throughout," said another navy memo.

But the navy's chief objection to the film was that it presented an "inaccurate" portrait of the navy's officer training program.

"The script contains a multitude of problem areas," stated a July 16, 1980, Navy Department memo. One of those problems, the memo said, is that the "Jody calls [are] offensive and most inaccurate." The navy maintained that while the "napalm sticks to kids" Jody call may have been used during the Vietnam War, it was no longer in use at boot camps in the early 1980s—the time period depicted in the film. That was the "Old Navy," the navy argued. The "New Navy" no longer tolerated offensive Jody calls.

"Comments about napalming little children and Sgt. Foley's entire character are not consistent with the strict selection process that prospective Aviation Officer Candidate drill instructors go through," the navy memo said.

So if the producers wanted the navy's cooperation, they would have to do a major rewrite and take out the offensive Jody calls.

But Douglas Day Stewart, the film's screenwriter and associate producer, had done his homework. He knew that the "Napalm sticks to kids" Jody call was still being used in the navy's officer candidate school, and he refused to take it out of the film.

"I put the Jody calls in from the research trip I took to the naval base in Pensacola before I sold the project," says Stewart, a former navy officer himself. "I met a guy there who was a model for Foley [the drill instructor]. He was famous for some of these Jody calls. I sat down with him in a lunch hall one day for many hours and took these Jody calls down

by pen. I can see why the military wouldn't like it. They didn't want to acknowledge the reality of a lot of things. They had a whole list of changes they wanted, which would have turned it into a navy recruiting film."

On a subsequent trip to Pensacola, Stewart and the film's director, Taylor Hackford, toured the naval base in a last ditch effort to get the navy to change its mind and help them with their production. The director, however, also wanted to see if Stewart had his facts right.

Early one morning, Hackford hooked up with a group of young officer candidates who were getting ready for a lengthy run. Hackford, an avid jogger, had come prepared. He slipped on his running shoes and took off with them. Stewart decided to tag along, trying to keep up with the pack in his black dress shoes.

"I came running in my street shoes," says Stewart with a laugh. "I was very nervous. It was up to me to prove that these guys still use these Jody calls. Is there a Jody call like this? Or did I lie?"

After running several miles, the young men—with no officers in sight—stopped and talked to the filmmakers. Hackford put the question to them straight. He wanted to know if the "napalm sticks to kids" Jody call was still in use in the navy.

All of the officer candidates said that they had heard it being used while they were in training.

"One guy said he hated singing 'napalm sticks to kids,' and that he'd hear a lot worse," Stewart recalls. "And I said, 'But they still use it, right?' And they confirmed it. Every single detail was confirmed."

Hackford agrees. "The officer candidates verified that DIs still used that Jody call," he says. "The navy says they don't do it, but they were lying. They absolutely do."

"Those were genuine Jody calls," insists Stewart. "They are the most profane moments in any movie ever. I could see why the military wouldn't like it. They had a whole list of changes they wanted, which would have turned it into a navy recruiting movie. They didn't want to acknowledge the reality of a lot of things."

Once again, the Pentagon was trying to change the facts to make the military look better in movies than it really is.

The Pentagon also had political reasons for not supporting the film—they were afraid the movie would anger the government of the Philippines and cause problems for the navy, which had a huge presence there.

The film opens with a flashback to Zack Mayo's preadolescence when he visits his father, an American sailor stationed in the Philippines port city of Olongapo, who is shackled up with a Filipino woman who is not his wife. Zack learns how to treat a woman from his father, and later, when Zack is set upon by a gang of Philippine youths, how to survive in a very tough environment—two aspects of his childhood that would shape his adulthood.

The navy, however, didn't like any of this.

"U.S. and Republic of Philippines relations would not be served by the way in which Olongapo is portrayed," the navy said in a memo. "The theme of a Navy sailor [Zack's father] getting a Philippine girl pregnant out of wedlock is not desirable. . . . The concept of Filipino gangs attacking sailors is not an accurate portrayal of the Philippine community and their relationship with American sailors." (Never mind that the navy's reading of the script was inaccurate. Indeed, there is no mention in the script of an attack by Filipino gangs on navy sailors. The attack was upon Zack, who was only a young boy at the time.)

Marty Elfand, the film's producer, says that the navy's attempts to sanitize the reality of the Philippines were totally unjustified. "The hookers owned Olongapo," he says. "They owned all the property and all the stores. They were the culture of the city. All their money was made from the navy. It was a navy town, but the navy didn't want to admit it. This was not a far-out rendition of what goes on. This was mild. This was not terrible. Have you ever dealt with the navy? It's like dealing with the Catholic Church. They are an institution that has a view of how they should be seen by the public and it doesn't always coincide with reality."

The navy also objected to the script's depiction of Norfolk, Virginia, the navy town where the film was to have originally been set. "Norfolk honky-tonk area near the base depicted in a manner neither accurate nor conducive to good community relations," the navy said in an internal memo.

The navy also objected to the way some of the young women of Mobile, Alabama—referred to in the original script as "Mobile debts"—were portrayed as social climbers who were out to snare young naval officers, even if it meant getting pregnant out of wedlock. "Reference to Mobile debts offensive to City of Mobile and not accurate," the navy memo said.

The film's writer, however, knew that it was true because he had seen it himself during his own days as a young naval officer. But the navy didn't care about that. So when the navy refused to provide assistance, the filmmakers decided to change their locations in Alabama to locations in Washington, and changing Mobile debts to Puget Sound debts.

The navy told the filmmakers that they would be willing to provide assistance if they would change the script, and Elfand met with Pentagon officials on several occasions to see if they could work out a deal.

"I know that Elfand had Doug [Stewart] prepare a sanitized version of the script," director Hackford recalls, "but I was secretly hoping that it would not come to that—that we would not get military approval, because it would have been a much more boring film. If they'd agreed to cooperate, they would have had much more control."

In the end, the filmmakers decided that they could not maintain their artistic integrity if they made the changes demanded by the military. Saying no to the Pentagon would cost them more money, but the studio executives reluctantly agreed with their decision.

It was, however, a lesson in Pentagon economics that wouldn't be lost on Don Simpson, the Paramount executive who had given the green light to *An Officer and a Gentleman*, and who would go on to produce *Top Gun* for Paramount a few years later.

"Don got huge cooperation from the Department of Defense for *Top Gun*," Hackford says. "He made a lot of money on *Top Gun*, and he made it the way the military wanted it. He told them it would show off their planes and show their guys as dashing young men. That's what the military loves, and that's what they wanted *An Officer and a Gentleman* to be, but it was rawer and harder. The military is about control. The whole essence of chain-of-command is control. They perceive film as propaganda.

"The U.S. military gave a huge gift when they gave all that stuff to Paramount for *Top Gun*. And they got a recruiting film in return. I don't deny their right to try to get things done their way, and the studios, who are always trying to save money, will always agree to censor material in exchange for getting this incredible hardware for free or at nominal cost. A writer is going to be on the horns of a dilemma to change material so that they can get equipment from the military. Should the military have this power? They've got it. You can't deny it. They've got the planes and the ships."

After the negotiations to change the script for *An Officer and a Gentleman* failed to produce a script that was satisfactory to the military, the Navy Department declined to provide any assistance to the project, telling the producers that “production assistance offers no benefit to the service, rather, it is damaging to the Navy and to its recruiting program.” This undated memo was written by U.S. Navy Cdr. Gordon I. Peterson, director of production services division, to the assistant secretary of defense (public affairs).

But the navy didn’t simply stop at refusing to assist the production. When the producers turned to the Canadian military for assistance, the U.S. Navy put up roadblocks there, as well.

The film needed jet fighters, and if the American military wouldn’t provide them, the producers figured that maybe the Canadian military would. So the producers turned for help to the Snow Birds, Canada’s equivalent of the U.S. Navy’s high-performance team, the Blue Angels.

At first, the Snow Birds said they would be happy to cooperate. But then they got a phone call from Capt. Dale K. Patterson, director of the Navy Office of Information in Los Angeles.

“I obtained the phone number for the ‘Snow Birds’ in Moosejaw, Saskatchewan, and spoke to the executive officer, Captain Ron Duckworth, to ascertain if the Snow Birds were aware that the U.S. Dept. of Defense had not authorized cooperation with the film,” Patterson wrote in a “memorandum for the record,” dated April 29, 1981. “He stated that it was his understanding that the Snow Birds had been approached because of the unavailability of the Blue Angels due to prior scheduling arrangements. He said that he would discuss the matter with his commanding officer, Maj. Michael Murphy, who was en route to Juneau, Alaska, and that I could expect to hear from Major Murphy soon.

“I emphasized to Captain Duckworth that I was not suggesting that the Snow Birds not participate in the filming of ‘An Officer and a Gentleman,’ but that I felt it was important the Snow Birds know that the film had not been granted cooperation by DOD.”

A few days later, the Snow Birds told the producers that they would not be able to help them after all. A navy telegram, dated May 6, 1981, stated: “Snow Birds will not—repeat not—participate in Paramount Pictures filming mission.”

When the filmmakers asked the Snow Birds why they’d changed their

minds, they were told about the phone call they'd received from Captain Patterson.

Marty Elfand, the film's producer, was angry. What right did the American navy have to try to interfere with a deal he was trying to make with the Canadian military? So he called a friend of his who worked at the White House—Morgan Mason, special assistant to Pres. Ronald Reagan.

Reagan had been in office for less than four months, and Mason, like his boss in the Oval Office, was well connected in Hollywood. He was a former child actor and the son of actor James Mason.

"Morgan Mason worked for the Reagan White House," Elfand recalls. "I remember talking to him and asking him to help us, but I don't think he could. No one could help us with the navy."

But Mason tried. After talking to Elfand, he called Don Baruch, head of the Pentagon's film office, to find out what was going on.

A navy memo, dated May 5, 1981, said: "Late this afternoon, Don Baruch called to make us aware of a call he received from White House staffer Morgan Mason. Mason reportedly received a call asserting Capt. Patterson had communicated with the Canadian Air Force advising them not to cooperate with Paramount in the film. . . . Baruch initially told Mason he believed the report erroneous—that Capt. Patterson would not take it upon himself to communicate such a message—but that he would look into it. Baruch plans to call Mason back tomorrow morning to refute the allegation."

The navy denied that they had tried to dissuade the Canadians from helping the filmmakers, but Elfand doesn't believe them. "They wouldn't admit that Patterson did it," Elfand says. "But obviously, the Snow Birds backed out, so why would they back out after they said they would do it?"

But this wasn't the first film the navy tried to torpedo, and it almost certainly won't be the last.





# ★ CHAPTER 27 ★

## “WRITING THE SCENE TO THE ADMIRAL’S SPECIFICATIONS”

Adm. David Cooney sat in the cool, darkened screening room, fuming. Cooney, the navy’s chief of information, had written a new ending for the movie *Raise the Titanic* and had been assured by the film’s producers that his ending would be used in the movie. But now, as he watched the film at CBS Studios in Burbank, he realized for the first time that the ending he’d written had been scrapped.

“He was angry, as I was,” recalls Capt. Bill Graves, the navy’s technical advisor on the film, who also attended the screening. “I felt betrayed, and he did, too. Admiral Cooney spent time writing an ending for them. He felt that he was a custodian of the navy’s image and he was very serious about his job. But I think it was never their intention to shoot the scene that Admiral Cooney wrote. They just played with us on that.”

Cooney and Graves left the screening room on that hot August day in 1980 without saying a word to anyone. Cooney then flew back to Washington and promptly told the Department of Defense to withdraw its support of the film.

“At some point, he said if that’s the way the movie ends, it is not in keeping with our agreement,” Graves recalls. “We don’t want to have credit given to us because we did not cooperate with the movie for this type of ending, and we did not want to get mail from the public and Congress about why we would cooperate with a movie that was so unrealistic. It was Admiral Cooney’s idea that we not take credit for that movie

because it was an embarrassment, in that it was not the movie that we had signed on to cooperate with.”

The navy had already provided the ships, planes, and helicopters the film company had asked for—and had billed the company \$559,798 for their use. But if they weren’t going to use his ending, then the admiral didn’t want any screen credit on the picture thanking the navy for its cooperation.

“During my recent visit to the West Coast, I had the opportunity to observe a courtesy viewing of ‘Raise the Titanic,’” Cooney wrote in an angry memo, dated August 7, 1980, to the assistant secretary of defense. “I was disturbed to see that the producers had not honored their commitment to revise the screenplay.”

The executives at the film’s production company, Marble Arch Productions, were stunned. They’d made several script changes that the navy had asked for, and they were going to use Cooney’s ending right up until the last minute, but then decided that their original ending was better. And now the admiral was mad at them. So they tried to explain their position in a letter, dated August 20, 1980, to Don Baruch, head of the Pentagon’s film office.

“On behalf of Marble Arch Productions’ president and executive producer of ‘Raise the Titanic,’ Martin Starger, I would like to clarify our position regarding these circumstances,” wrote Richard O’Connor, the vice president in charge of production at Marble Arch. “It was Mr. Starger’s understanding that the suggestions of Admiral Cooney were to be taken as suggestions. We intended to incorporate into the screenplay all suggestions pertaining to actual Naval techniques as much as possible.

“Admiral Cooney’s suggested ending of the picture involving two civilians was seriously taken into consideration even to the extent of writing the scene to the Admiral’s specifications. Bill Frye, the producer, did submit this scene at the time it was written to Admiral Cooney and to your office as the intended ending to our picture.

“However, later on, it was decided that the ending as originally written by Adam Kennedy was creatively the better ending and that was the scene eventually filmed. It was unfortunate that Bill Frye apparently neglected to notify Admiral Cooney and you of this change, but because of his many responsibilities during filming, I can understand this oversight.”

The producers had made several script changes requested by the navy—changes that were designed to reduce any possible negative impact the film might have on U.S.-Soviet relations.

The film was directed by Jerry Jameson—who three years earlier had received full navy cooperation for *Airport '77*—and starred Richard Jordan as globetrotting adventurer Dirk Pitt, a retired naval officer who works on special assignments for the navy. In the movie, Dirk Pitt discovers that the only known deposits of a rare uranium-like mineral that the Pentagon needs to fuel a new defensive shield against incoming enemy missiles is sitting at the bottom of the ocean in the hold of the *Titanic*. Pitt then sells the navy on the idea of raising the legendary wreck, but along the way, the Russians get wind of the project and send their own ships to try to seize the cargo once it’s been salvaged.

In real life, however, the U.S. State Department was worried that the film could have an adverse impact on U.S.-Soviet relations if the DOD assisted a film based on the original screenplay. After all, the script showed an American agent killing a Russian soldier on a Russian island, with the full support of the U.S. military.

“We believe there are aspects of the film which could have an adverse affect on US-Soviet relations if the Department of Defense made its resources available to support the filming, due to the manner in which the US-Soviet confrontation is depicted in the film,” wrote State Department public affairs officer William J. Gehron, in an internal memo dated October 24, 1979.

The Pentagon agreed.

“We continue to believe that, as written, the film is not particularly helpful to our national interest,” wrote George W. Bader, deputy director of the Defense Department’s office of European and NATO Affairs, in a memo dated October 29, 1979, to Don Baruch, chief of the Pentagon’s film office.

But the navy was eager to provide assistance to the film. After all, it would show navy salvage divers doing the impossible—raising the legendary sunken ocean liner from its watery grave. That, the navy figured, would be good for recruiting.

In a memo to Baruch, dated October 31, 1979, Capt. Thomas Caldwell, the navy’s Assistant Chief of Information, wrote: “The Navy’s position is that providing assistance is warranted and will aid in recruiting

efforts by showing the public the sophisticated equipment used by the Navy to explore the ocean depths and give some insight on the expertise required for undersea salvage work.”

Even so, if the producers wanted the navy’s assistance, the script would have to be rewritten, and Admiral Cooney would help them rewrite it.

The original screenplay begins on a Russian island in the Arctic Circle with an American mining engineer discovering the abandoned mine where the world’s only known deposits of a rare mineral called Byzanium were secretly mined by American army engineers back in the days of the Russian czar. All the Byzanium was removed in 1911, but a clue left behind in the mine hints that it was taken to England and then placed in a stronghold aboard the *Titanic* for its ill-fated maiden voyage to America. But as the American engineer leaves the mine with this secret, he is spotted and shot by a Russian soldier. And just as the Russian moves in for the kill, Dirk Pitt shows up and kills the Russian.

Well, the State Department didn’t think it would be a good idea for the Pentagon to assist a film that showed an American killing a Russian soldier on Russian soil. So if the producers wanted the navy’s assistance, they would have to change that.

“The attached screenplay has no relationship to any true historical event, and we find it far-fetched and unrealistic,” wrote James V. Siena, deputy assistant secretary of defense, in a memo dated October 17, 1979, to Don Baruch. “It portrays some U.S. actions, such as the U.S. Army’s placing an agent on Soviet soil and the subsequent shooting of a Soviet soldier in the course of his duty by another U.S. agent also on Soviet soil, which plays into the hands of current Soviet propaganda that it is U.S. policies which are provocative and ‘militaristic,’ while Soviet policies are ‘peace-loving’ and truly supportive of détente.”

Two weeks later, Baruch wrote a memo saying, “Producer of subject production has agreed to make revisions to accommodate the requirements outlined on the enclosure. Consequently, the screenplay is approved with those changes.”

Baruch wanted the producers to eliminate the CIA’s role in the story, and according to an enclosure accompanying his memo, “References to Russian island will be deleted. The island will be identified as one off Russia that has been under international dispute for some time. There will

be incorporated the fact that the Russian soldier actually had no business being on the island as they have no sovereignty over it.”

The original screenplay also showed Dirk Pitt bringing the American mining engineer who had been shot by the Russian soldier back to Andrews Air Force Base aboard a military airplane. Baruch, however, didn’t want the American military involved in this rescue effort. “The return of Pitt with the wounded mining expert will be played with them arriving by commercial aircraft at Dulles airport,” he wrote.

Baruch also wanted to make sure that there would be no show of weapons when the Soviet navy confronts the U.S. Navy at the end of the film in a high seas stand-off over control of the *Titanic* and its cargo.

“Although present screenplay does not call for any show of weaponry in later part, it is understood that confrontation will be without any such show of force,” he wrote. “Ships without display of weapons will be acceptable.”

The producers had the script rewritten to address each of these recommendations and then had John Horton, their liaison to the Pentagon, send the new pages to Baruch. But Baruch was furious. He didn’t think the producers had gone nearly far enough to address the DOD’s concerns.

“Does producer Frye and you think I am a fool?” Baruch said in an angry, handwritten note to Horton. “Nothing done except the CIA dropped. No one would believe that incident did not take place on Russian soil and we killed Russian soldier on their land. No reference whatsoever to anything we talked about. The scene will contain lines we want or they can film without Navy ships and that’s that!”

The producers then went back to work and retooled the script to bring it into compliance with the DOD’s desires—even going so far as to tacking on the new ending written by Admiral Cooney.

In Clive Cussler’s book that the film was based on, the *Titanic* is raised, the Byzantium is recovered, and the missile defense shield is activated. But in the movie, after the navy goes to all the trouble of raising the *Titanic*, the Byzantium is nowhere to be found in the ship’s cargo hold. But Dirk Pitt discovers a postcard that hints to its whereabouts—a graveyard in Southby, England, where it had been secretly buried seventy years earlier, just before the *Titanic* had set sail on its first and only voyage.

Pitt relays this information to his scientist colleague, Dr. Gene Seagram, played by actor David Selby, but then they are told by Navy Adm.

James Sandecker, played by Jason Robards, that it's just as well the Byzantium was never found because the Pentagon would probably have used it to make the ultimate nuclear bomb instead of a missile defense shield.

Outraged that the true purpose of the Byzantium had been kept a secret from them—that it was going to be used as an offensive weapon, not a defensive one—Pitt and Seagram sneak off to the graveyard in England, and with a Geiger counter locate the Byzantium. As the movie ends, they search their consciences and decide that the world would be better off without another bomb, and they walk away without digging it up.

But this was not the ending that Admiral Cooney had written. Cooney felt that showing a retired naval officer in the employ of the navy going against its wishes made the navy look bad, and he was not going to approve it.

Richard O'Connor, the production company executive who had to explain to Admiral Cooney why his ending hadn't been used, recalls that the admiral's main concern was that he didn't want Dirk Pitt to be involved in the decision to leave the Byzantium buried in the English graveyard.

"He thought that Dirk Pitt was representing the navy, and that leaving it buried was not what the navy would do," O'Connor recalls. "He wanted to leave that decision in the hands of civilians and not the navy."

O'Connor recalls that in the ending written by the admiral, the decision to leave the Byzantium buried in the graveyard was made by two civilians: the scientist played by David Selby and by a new character the admiral had created—the scientist's boss. The screenplay, however, had already gone through thirteen rewrites by three writers—Adam Kennedy, Eric Hughes, and Larry McMurtry of *Lonesome Dove* fame—and the producers were not about to let a navy admiral take a whack at it.

"I was sort of amused," O'Connor recalls. "It was the first time that I had someone other than a writer wanting to write the ending—or any other part—of a movie. I think it's pretty presumptuous of the admiral to think that we were going to rewrite the script the way he wanted it rewritten. Whether he was an admiral or not, it would have a pretty heavy impact on the Hollywood community if the DOD started rewriting the scripts, saying this is the version you have to go with.

"He never said to me: 'If you don't do my rewrite the way I think it should end, we're not going to give you cooperation.' So I thanked him,

diplomatically, and said we appreciated it, but we’ve already had a number of writers, and we thought the original ending worked better creatively.”

Cooney, who left the navy a year after withdrawing approval for *Raise the Titanic*, served as president and CEO of Goodwill Industries from 1981 until he retired in 1995. He died in 1999.

His widow, Beverly Cooney, said she didn’t know that her husband tried to rewrite the ending of the movie, but she remembers that he took a very hands-on approach to his job.

“I didn’t know he wrote the ending, but I know he had an interest in the movie,” she recalls. “I know he had input into things he didn’t like. Whenever he worked with Hollywood, he had problems. He was more naval officer than Hollywood. I know he was very often unhappy about the kinds of things that they did. They would discuss something, and then the studio would do something else.”

Mrs. Cooney also remembers her husband reading the novel on which the film was based. “He read it before it came to the navy. He read it and enjoyed it.”

Shown the documents that detail the DOD’s and the State Department’s demand for script changes, author Clive Cussler, whose book the film was based on, was outraged. “I had no idea this was going on when they were making the movie,” he says. “It’s ridiculous. It’s coercion. If you don’t do this, you won’t get any cooperation from us.”

Cussler, who has published seventeen Dirk Pitt novels, doesn’t think navy admirals should be rewriting the endings of movies, either. “I don’t think that’s what they’re paid for,” he says.

Ironically, Cussler and Cooney had graduated one year apart from the same high school—Alhambra High in California—but Cussler never knew it until now. He’d met Admiral Cooney in his office a couple of times in the course of his work as one of the world’s top explorers of sunken ships, but they never talked about the movie.

“He was kind of a strange cat,” Cussler recalls. “I talked to him twice about getting cooperation from the navy for looking for naval shipwrecks, and when I came into his office, I had to sit in a chair like a little kid in the principal’s office. Instead of sitting across the desk, he made me sit in a chair alongside the end of the desk facing the wall.”



Cussler hated everything about the movie except the music.

“Whatever they changed for the navy wouldn’t have affected the quality of the film,” Cussler laughs. “The only thing good about the movie was the score. The direction was terrible. The screenwriting was just abominable. Even the editing was poor. It was just a joke. That’s why I never sold to Hollywood again for over twenty years.”

Today, Cussler says he’ll only let Hollywood turn one of his novels into a movie if he has the final say on the script, the cast, and the director. And after looking at the demands for script changes that the Pentagon required the producers to make on *Raise the Titanic*, he says he wouldn’t want the next Dirk Pitt movie to go through that process again, either.

“I’d fight it,” he says.

# ★ CHAPTER 28 ★

## JOIN THE NAVY— BE INDICTED

The F-14 Tomcat roared off the deck of the USS *Nimitz* and catapulted into the evening sky to rendezvous with several other jet fighters and camera planes to shoot a scene for the movie *The Final Countdown*. On deck, navy flight squadron commander Emory W. Brown Jr. carefully logged each jet as it took off and when it returned. Per the navy's instructions, the film's producers would be billed \$4,125 for every hour of flight time flown for the movie, and it was Commander Brown's job to make sure that the hours were properly reported,

The navy had high hopes for the film, which would star Kirk Douglas as the captain of a modern-day nuclear aircraft carrier that enters a time warp and is transported back to December 1941 on the eve of the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor. The film's writer, Thomas Hunter, promised the navy they'd get a movie they could be proud of.

"Our intent is to make a good film and an honest one," Hunter said in his pitch letter to the navy seeking their cooperation in making the movie. "To my mind, movie-goers today are hungry for adventurous and informative entertainment. We would like to take the public on a tour of one of the largest ships in the world and show them how 5,000 men can tackle any problem thrown at them in times of stress. We feel our 'time formula,' which is now evolving with the Navy's suggestions into a modern naval allegory, will accomplish just that.

"Naturally, we understand that we will be obligated, as in past pro-

ductions with Navy cooperation, to reimburse the Navy for whatever we utilize. We feel that we can give you an excellent production which will be both an exciting adventure for the public and a boon to the Navy/Marine recruiter.”

The navy gave the filmmakers its full cooperation, but instead of a boon to recruiting, the navy got the biggest scandal of its long history of dealings with Hollywood.

In 1983, three years after the film was released, Commander Brown’s distinguished career as one of the navy’s top aviators would be in ruins, shot down by charges that he took a bribe from the movie producers in exchange for underreporting the actual number of flight hours performed for the movie by the ship’s planes under his command.

Indicted on criminal charges of bribery and conspiracy, Brown was put on trial and convicted of a lesser offense—accepting an illegal gratuity. Brown denied the allegations, but the evidence against him was damning. Federal prosecutors produced a note he’d written to the film’s producer, Peter V. Douglas—the son of the film’s star—in which he mentioned a “contribution” that had been made to him through a “middleman” in return for helping Peter Douglas secure the flight time for “chicken feed.”

Brown billed the production company for only 32.5 hours of flight time, but the navy alleged that the *Nimitz*’s planes had actually flown more than two hundred hours for the movie—a savings for the producer of nearly \$700,000. Indeed, prosecutors uncovered a telegram Brown had sent to the producer saying that the company could have been billed for 204 hours of flight time.

Brown claimed that his note and telegram had been misinterpreted—that he was only trying to play hardball with the producer in order to get him to cough up \$34,000 in administrative expenses owed to the navy. But the jury didn’t buy his explanation and convicted him of accepting an illegal gratuity. He received only a suspended jail sentence and probation, but his navy career was over, although the navy did allow him to stay on for six more months and to retire with full benefits.

Peter Douglas and his production company, The Byrna Co., who were defendants in a separate civil suit, reached an out-of-court settlement, agreeing to pay the government \$400,000. Claims in the civil suit of conspiracy between Douglas and Brown were dismissed shortly before the settlement was reached.

The incident barely made a ripple in Hollywood, which takes such scandals in stride. Peter Douglas went on to produce several other films in a not-too-distinguished career, including *Fletch*, which starred Chevy Chase as a bumbling reporter, and *Something Wicked This Way Comes*, which was based on the Ray Bradbury novel.

The affair destroyed Brown's career, and to this day the incident remains the biggest scandal ever to involve the military's dealings with Hollywood.

Commander Brown's downfall was not the only time someone in the military tried to shake down Hollywood. Ten years after Brown's conviction, Maj. David Georgi, the army's project officer assigned to oversee the production of *Clear and Present Danger*, uncovered a scheme in which an army colonel tried to solicit a "donation" from a production company in return for his cooperation with the film's producers.

The Pentagon allows producers to make donations to the military bases they film at. But those donations can only be made on a strictly voluntary basis. They cannot be solicited.

In 1993, the Pentagon was preparing to give the producers of *Clear and Present Danger* permission from the army to shoot part of their movie at the Los Alamitos Army Airfield in Southern California, the home of the Fortieth Infantry Reserve Division. But when representatives of the film company, accompanied by Major Georgi, went to the base to scout locations, the Army reserve commander who ran the installation suggested to the producers that he might be more cooperative if they made a donation to the base's "morale fund."

"It was more than \$5,000," was all Major Georgi would say about the sum the colonel had asked for. "It was probably not strictly for the morale fund, but for the general fund, which is used at the discretion of the commander. He wanted substantial monies donated to the installation as the installation saw fit. From my point of view, it came down to a form of coercion."

Georgi was shocked. In his written report on the incident, he told his bosses back at the Pentagon that an "apparent solicitation on the part of a senior-level member occurred during negotiations and coordination for location support."

The report went on to say that "during the final stages of securing

Dept. of Defense approval for support of 'Clear and Present Danger,' coordination for the use of a military facility led the DOD project officer and representatives of the production company to a local Southern California military installation. In the midst of negotiations to arrange for limited filming on the installation, it became apparent that the senior military official representing the installation would not commit the facility's resources until a 'rental' arrangement could be settled. Even when apprised of the obvious conflicts with [DOD guidelines] and other ethics regulations, the official insisted on a specific financial windfall for the installation."

Georgi, who was only a major, was in a sticky situation: he had to stand up to a higher-ranking officer and tell him that what he was asking for was improper and illegal.

"I was upset," Georgi recalls. "This was a major trying to deal with a full colonel. It's not easy, but you have to stand your ground. I had to make sure that he understood the regulations."

And Georgi was prepared to go all the way, up to and including bringing charges against the colonel.

The threat of legal action—and quite possibly a court-martial—was averted, however, when the colonel finally realized that the major was serious.

"I made sure that he understood in no uncertain terms that there would be no quid pro quo in the form of a donation," Georgi recalls. "I kept him out of trouble."

In his written report, Georgi said: "The potential for UCMJ [Uniform Code of Military Justice] action was averted by the intervention of the next higher headquarters which authorized support based on the potential benefits to DOD as well as local installation."

In his official report, Georgi went on to detail the dangers inherent in such a situation, including the possibility that it could lead to such bad feelings that the producers could walk away from their agreement and make their film without the military's support.

"Any solution to this situation is fraught with difficulties and the potential for a loss of support," he wrote. "When a commander realizes he or she 'holds all the aces' in the final decision on local military support to an entertainment production, the DOD project officer has to rely on the integrity, fairness and farsightedness of the armed services. While the reg-

ulations are specific when dealing with direct compensation for military support to productions—the production company shall be billed for only those expenses that are considered to be additional expenses to the government—the DOD project officer is put at risk when he or she is involved with the scenario of production donations. The DOD project officer must take a stance that will preclude the production company from ever feeling coerced into making a donation to secure military support. Although precarious, he or she can offer suggested donation limits, but it is advisable to remain completely clear of negotiations for donations.”

In the end, the matter was settled with no donation being made as a condition of cooperation; no charges were brought against the colonel, and most important for the army, the incident did not leak out to the media.

“It was resolved to everybody’s satisfaction,” Georgi recalls.

And after the filming was completed, the producers ended up “voluntarily” making that \$5,000 donation to the base’s morale fund anyway.

According to Georgi, Hollywood producers have run into similar problems with the navy, air force, and Marines. “If you talk to the other branches,” he says, “they run into the same type of situations.”

But Georgi wasn’t out of the woods yet. Once the producers received approval from the Pentagon, they moved their production down to Mexico, bringing three army Black Hawk helicopters and their crews with them. And that’s where Georgi ran into another embarrassing problem for the military.

Three U.S. Army Black Hawk helicopters swooped low over the fifteen-story office building in Xalapa, Mexico, their rotors whoop-whoop-whooping as the American pilots hovered momentarily outside the penthouse suite that housed the administrative office for the movie *Clear and Present Danger*. Inside the office, the young and attractive female staffers looked up from their work to stare in amazement at the noisy, high-tech military helicopters hovering outside only a few feet away. Several of the young women rushed to the windows to get a better look.

The choppers and their crew members had just finished a day’s shooting on the picture, but instead of returning to their assigned airfield in Vera Cruz, they took an unauthorized detour and flew by the movie company’s offices. Some of the film’s stuntmen who were riding along in one of the helicopters had come up with a funny idea, and somehow they

got all three pilots and their crews to go along. Hanging halfway out the Black Hawk's open gun door, two of the stuntmen and the chopper's crew chief held up a handmade sign for the ladies in the office to see. It said: "SHOW US YOUR TITS."

Everybody on board got a big laugh out of the gag—until the helicopters returned to their airstrip at Vera Cruz. That's when they learned that someone had complained, and that there was going to be an investigation.

The film crew had come to Mexico in February 1994 to shoot scenes for the movie, which was based on a Tom Clancy novel about CIA intrigue and covert operations against Colombian drug lords. Mexican locations would double for Colombia, and the film's producers had talked the Department of Defense into sending the helicopters down to Mexico to support the filming. It had taken a lot of effort by the Pentagon to get the Mexican government to clear the way for three helicopter gunships to enter sovereign Mexican territory. There was civil unrest in one of the nearby Mexican states—revolutionaries were holding hostages—and the Mexican government was worried that the appearance of U.S. Army helicopters in the region might start a panic.

"That was a major problem because of the revolution that was going on," recalls Mace Neufeld, the film's producer. "You know, some newspaper man down there could publish a headline saying that America is sending in American forces."

Finally, after numerous cables were exchanged between the American and Mexican authorities, the Pentagon was given the green light to fly the helicopters down to Mexico. But now this silly stunt threatened to cause an international incident. Major Georgi, the army public affairs officer assigned to the film, hurried over to the production offices to apologize to the women.

In his official report, Major Georgi, who referred to the incident as "military impropriety during film production support," noted that he had hurried over to the production office and met with "each female of the administrative staff to determine if any of them were personally affronted by this action. None felt any offense." More importantly, he wanted to find out if any pictures had been taken of the helicopter and the offending sign.

"It was also determined that no photographs were taken of the aircraft during this flyby activity," he wrote. That was a lucky break for the army

and for the helicopter's crew. No pictures meant there would be no embarrassing newspaper stories.

The investigation of the incident was handled by the army's 160th Special Operations Aviation Regiment at Fort Bragg, North Carolina—the Black Hawks' home base.

"The results of this investigation showed that members of the film crew, who were passengers on the 160th MH-60 [Black Hawk] helicopter, were the main perpetrators of the reported incident," wrote Lt. Col. Kenneth S. McGraw, the public affairs officer at Fort Bragg, in his official report. And while that finding may have explained away how the "show us your tits" sign was flashed at the female production workers, it did not explain how the pilots of all three helicopters had deviated from their flight plans to end up hovering their Black Hawks outside the office's fifteenth-floor windows.

In the end, only one soldier—the crew chief who'd helped hold up the offending sign—was reprimanded. According to Georgi's report, "appropriate disciplinary action was taken by the soldier's commanding officer."

Some movie producers, like those who produced *Clear and Present Danger* and *Black Hawk Down*, can get the Pentagon to ship military assets to foreign countries for them to use on foreign locations. Producers who can't get the Pentagon to cooperate, however, often have to leave the country to find the military equipment they need elsewhere. This not only contributes to the growing problem of "runaway production" and the loss of American jobs, but can also put desperate producers at risk of landing in jail.

The producers of *Good Morning, Vietnam*, which starred Robin Williams as a wisecracking air force disc jockey in Vietnam, didn't ask for the Pentagon's assistance because the producers knew that they wouldn't get it.

"We didn't request military assistance," says a knowledgeable source on the film, which was produced by Touchstone Pictures, a subsidiary of the Walt Disney Company. "We thought the script would be perceived as antimilitary, so we didn't ask."

The film, which was shot in Thailand, got all the assistance it needed from the Thai air force—for a small bribe.

"Things were done under the table," the source says. "There are offi-



cial and unofficial ways to get things done. We got a lot of helicopters—American helicopters—from them. You had to make certain cash payments that went to the military. But it was absolutely not Disney's policy.”

Indeed, bribing foreign officials had been illegal for six years, since the passage in 1977 of the Foreign Corrupt Practices Act.

# ★ CHAPTER 29 ★

## JOIN THE ARMY— BE INDICTED

**I**t would make a great plot for a movie: A former U.S. Army sergeant, a onetime army reserve captain, and their army-wannabe buddy find postmilitary success as stuntmen, technical advisors, and owners of a thriving movie-prop business.

Except that this isn't a movie, and if it were, it is one the Pentagon wouldn't assist because it's going to have a bad ending.

The captain, Steve Goyen, a part-time actor who had a small role in the 1999 film *The General's Daughter*, surrendered to FBI agents in March 2003 after being charged in a sixteen-count federal indictment with falsifying military documents as part of a scheme to illegally obtain machine guns and military equipment to rent to the movie industry.

The sergeant, Matthew Robert Anderson, was arrested on May 14, 2003, on similar charges. And the buddy, Jared Jeffrey Chandler, who never actually served in the army despite a résumé that claims he did, is also a defendant in the case.

The three men served together in the army's 697th Reserve detachment, a now-disbanded unit that acted something like a secretarial temp-agency, providing office workers for the army's Special Operations Command South, now headquartered in Puerto Rico. Goyen was the commanding officer; Anderson was the supply sergeant; and according to the sworn affidavit of FBI special agent Henry Ballard, who has been working the case with the Army's Criminal Investigation Division (CID),

Chandler “was a self-described sergeant—self-described because he was never legitimately authorized to be in the military, whether active or in the reserves.”

FBI agent Ballard, a former army captain who has investigated more than thirty cases of procurement fraud in the military, said in his affidavit that the defendants obtained the machine guns from licensed manufacturers by using falsified army procurement orders, claiming that they needed the weapons to conduct counternarcotics and counterterrorism training. The affidavit, which is attached to the criminal complaint, also said that on at least one occasion, the defendants “conducted unauthorized combat missions that were videotaped by ‘Hollywood’ friends of Goyen.”

The 697th had a tiny two-room office in the National Guard armory in Burbank, and not much else. The army didn’t allow the 697th to procure weapons or to do any training with weapons.

“The Reserve unit of which Goyen, Anderson and Chandler were members was only authorized by its higher headquarters to essentially provide personnel to handle desk jobs,” Ballard said in his affidavit. “The unit was never authorized to have or train with guns, to acquire military property, or to conduct itself, or have its members conduct themselves, as a military unit for any other purpose.”

Three years ago, the army’s CID launched an investigation into the goings-on at the 697th.

“In early 2000,” Ballard said in his affidavit, “I was contacted by U.S. Army CID special agent Matthew McGruder who told me that he had found documents signed by Goyen, Anderson and Chandler which indicated that [they] had been members of the 697th, had forged or used forged U.S. military letterhead and documents to acquire [surplus military] property, had created, used or carried fraudulent military ID cards, and had forged or used forged U.S. military letterhead and documents to obtain assault rifles, including machine guns, for unauthorized military training and for personal use in connection with their operation of a prop supply to serve the movie industry.”

According to the indictment, Goyen “unlawfully possessed and aided, abetted, counseled, commanded, induced and procured” the possession of dozens of machine guns, including ten M-16s, a 9mm Uzi, a Russian-style AK-47, two MP5SD submachine guns with silencers, a

G36KE assault weapon, a Zastava M61J Scorpion machine pistol, and numerous other SWAT team-style submachine guns.

Goyen, Anderson, and Chandler are also accused of using false papers and stolen military procurement codes to obtain surplus military equipment, including Kevlar helmets, parachutes, backpack radios, body armor, rucksacks, rations, sleeping bags, tactical vehicle-mounted radios, underwater diver propulsion vehicles, and “dummy” blocks of C-4 explosives, detonation cord, and triggering devices. They allegedly got this equipment and matériel from the Defense Marketing Reutilization Office, which makes surplus military equipment available to reserve units.

Through this alleged scam, Goyen, Anderson, and Chandler were able to gain access to something the movie industry wanted—weapons and authentic military equipment—and then rent it to the industry at a tremendous profit.

Movie producers who receive approval from the Department of Defense can get all the military equipment and weaponry they want for their films from the military at little or no cost. But producers who make military-themed movies that the Pentagon doesn't like—movies like *The General's Daughter*, which depicted rape and murder at an army installation—have to find their military equipment elsewhere. They can either make their own props, or they can rent very expensive military-style weapons and equipment from a handful of Hollywood prop houses.

Goyen, Anderson, and Chandler set up shop in a prop house in Burbank called Gibbons Ltd., whose owner, Mike Gibbons, is a licensed firearms dealer and a leading supplier of weapons and military props to the movie industry.

The defendants called their movie rental business SWAG, an acronym for Special Warfare Advisory Group. Ironically, “swag” is also slang for stolen goods, and in mob parlance, it means: “stolen without a gun.”

In September 1999, Defense Investigative Service questioned Anderson about the activities of SWAG. He gave them a written statement, which Ballard summarized in his affidavit. “Anderson stated that he, Goyen and Chandler established in early 1998 the ‘Special Warfare Advisory Group,’” Ballard wrote. “Goyen, Chandler and Anderson acquired military equipment which they rented to movies and TV shows and shared equally in the net profit.”

Gibbons gave the defendants space in his warehouse to rent their surplus military gear—but not their machine guns—to movie productions, and according to the indictment, Goyen used false military documents in an attempt to get Gibbons to sell him six machine guns—including two Paratroop Model M249s, two Standard Model M249s, and two MAG 58s—that were legally owned by Gibbons Ltd.

According to the indictment, Goyen “knowingly made a false and fictitious written statement intended and likely to deceive [Gibbons] with respect to a fact material to the lawfulness of the sale of such firearm, in that [Goyen] represented that he was authorized on behalf of the United States Department of Defense to obtain such weapons for testing, evaluation and training by the U.S. Army Reserve, Detachment 697.”

Mike Gibbons, the owner of the prop shop that was the headquarters for the defendants’ now-defunct movie rental business, is not a defendant in the case, nor is he accused of any wrongdoing. “I have no comment,” Gibbons said.

Goyen flatly denied the charges in the indictment. “They’re all completely false,” he said in a brief telephone interview in May 2003. “Ridiculous and false.”

Anderson, a former army Special Forces sergeant who fought in Operation Desert Storm, received an “other than honorable” discharge in 1991 after he was caught trying to smuggle several captured Iraqi weapons—including a Swedish-made submachine gun—into the United States on his return from Kuwait. Since then, he has appeared in numerous films as an actor and stuntman, and worked as a property master on such films as *Bloodfist VI*, *A Bedfull of Foreigners*, and *The Dangerous*. Anderson declined comment.

Chandler was probably the best connected of the three in Hollywood. He’d landed small roles in numerous movies and was a longtime friend of writer-director John Milius, who introduced him around town as a bright young kid with a lot of knowledge of the military. Before long, Chandler was working as a military technical advisor and weapons expert on some big-budget Hollywood productions. In 1994, producer Mace Neufeld hired him as a military technical advisor on *Clear and Present Danger*, based in part on Chandler’s impressive military résumé.

Chandler would go on to work as a military consultant, weapons advisor, or armorer on several other pictures, including *XXX*, *The Gen-*

*eral's Daughter*, *Soldier*, and *Operation Dumbo Drop*. In each instance, he presented a résumé that claimed that he was, or had been, a sergeant in the army reserve.

But the résumé was a phony, according to the criminal complaint. Chandler, it turns out, had never been in the regular army, and without having served in the army he had no legitimate right to be in the army reserve.

"There was no record that Chandler had attended basic training," Ballard said in his affidavit. "I therefore concluded that Chandler had no legitimate ties to the military at the time he was involved in acquiring or using military property, identification or firearms obtained through the use of fraudulent military documents."

Chandler declined comment. "I really can't talk about it," he said in a May 2003 telephone interview. "I'd like to be of more help, but right now, it's not possible."

The criminal complaint doesn't provide many details about which films these weapons and equipment allegedly ended up being used in. The only specific example cited in the complaint involved a large army surplus mechanic's toolbox that Goyen had allegedly requisitioned with false documents and then rented for \$200 a week to the producers of the 1997 film *McHale's Navy*. Goyen is not listed in the film's credits, but Ballard's affidavit says he was a property master on the film.

Goyen, meanwhile, was also accused of falsifying military documents to obtain a concealed-weapons permit. Goyen allegedly told the Glendale Police Department in 1995 that he needed the permit to carry out his "official duty as a courier for the 697th working 'counter-narcotics' operations"—another fabrication, according to the complaint.

According to the criminal complaint, Chandler and Goyen even conned the California Department of Justice into giving them "state-issued permits to transport assault weapons for use in operating their weapons/prop supply business for the movie business."

But not everyone was taken in by the alleged scam. The army disbanded the 697th reserve unit on May 3, 2000, after the CID's investigation began to uncover more and more evidence of alleged improprieties.

And a short time later, officials at the Marine Corps' film liaison office began telling movie producers that they would no longer work on any film or TV projects with which Chandler was associated.

“The Marine Corps has no interest in working on a motion picture where they’ve hired a technical advisor who is so obviously fraudulent in his claims as Jared Chandler is,” said Marine Corps Maj. Matt Morgan, during an interview in 2002. Morgan, who was then the head of the Marine Corps’ film office in Westwood, now heads up the public affairs office of the Corps’ newly created antiterrorism unit.

Morgan says that in 2001, the producers of *Behind Enemy Lines* asked the Marines to provide assistance to the film. But when Morgan learned that Chandler was going to be involved, he told them that they could forget about any assistance.

“They said, ‘Jared Chandler is working for us and he wants to hang these prop weapons on your aircraft,’” Morgan recalls with a laugh. “I said, ‘There is no way that I can allow a guy, who to the best of my knowledge is being investigated by several government agencies, to touch flying aircraft.’ How is he to be trusted? I mean, if I know this information, then I as the project officer would be liable for his actions. So that’s why we’re not interested in doing anything with him. He has misrepresented himself as a qualified Special Forces soldier with a number of various qualifications. But he has actually never been in the army. He’s never even been to army basic training. In today’s climate, it’s completely inconceivable and unforgivable for someone to claim something like that when they’re a complete fraud. It’s just sad.”

## Postscript

In October 2003, Goyen pleaded guilty to charges that he falsified military documents to illegally obtain weapons and equipment from U.S. military installations. He faces a maximum sentence of thirty-three years in prison and \$1 million in fines.

On January 26, 2004, Anderson pleaded guilty to the unlawful manufacture or possession of official insignia. He, too, is awaiting sentencing.

# ★ CHAPTER 30 ★

## CLINT EASTWOOD VERSUS THE PENTAGON

Clint Eastwood was furious. The Marine Corps had given him their full cooperation for his new movie, *Heartbreak Ridge*, but now, after he'd screened the finished film at the Pentagon, the Department of Defense was withdrawing its approval. Robert Sims, the assistant secretary of defense for public affairs, accused Eastwood of breaking his promise to change several scenes the way the DOD wanted it rewritten. So now the DOD wasn't going to allow Eastwood to show his movie on military bases, and they weren't going to let him put a note in the screen credits thanking the Marines for their assistance. And to add insult to injury, Sims was telling Eastwood that the DOD wasn't even going to allow him to hold a premiere of the movie to benefit the Marine Corps' Toys-for-Tots program, for which Eastwood was national chairman.

"It was not a film that we wanted Toys-for-Tots to be involved in," Sims recalls.

That really pissed Eastwood off. So on November 19, 1986, a few days after the film was screened at the Pentagon, Eastwood sat down in his office at Warner Bros. studios and wrote Sims an angry letter, calling him a liar and telling him that he'd never work on another film with the Pentagon again as long as Sims was there.

"Thank you for your letter of Nov. 18th," Eastwood told Sims. "In the first paragraph you state you are disappointed we did not consider your request for revisions to the film, 'Heartbreak Ridge.' This just is not true. We went over every recommendation you made very carefully."



Eastwood, who not only starred in the film but also produced and directed it, had made several changes in the original script to mollify the military, but said he didn't know that their "suggestions" were mandatory. He'd "toned down" some of the foul language and violence in the original script, and he'd changed his lead character from army to Marine. And he even made several other changes that he felt were downright ridiculous.

One of those changes involved the movie's climatic battle scene, which was based on the 1983 American invasion of the tiny Caribbean island of Grenada. Sims wanted Eastwood to fictionalize the name of the island and to eliminate a passing reference made in the script to the real-life Marines who were killed in the 1983 suicide bombing in Beirut, Lebanon.

The October 23, 1983, terrorist bombing of the Marine Corps barracks in Beirut, which killed 242 Marines, happened only two days before the U.S. invasion of Grenada, and a passing reference in the film to the Beirut bombing seemed appropriate to Eastwood. The DOD, however, thought that it raised the specter of a linkage between the two events.

"We wouldn't have wanted that connection made," Sims recalls. "The accusation at the time was that Grenada had been cranked up to take attention away from the disaster at the Marine Corps barracks. If that had been in the script, we would have objected to the connection being made. The criticism of Grenada was that the government had done it to take people's attention away from the bombing in Beirut, which was not true."

The script didn't even hint that there was any such devious intention on the part of the American government, but rather, simply pointed out that more than two hundred Marines had been killed in Beirut on the eve of the Grenada invasion. But Sims didn't even want that connection made in the minds of the viewers. In a May 5, 1986, memo to Gen. Walt Boomer, chief of the Marine Corps' office of public affairs, Sims wrote: "The time frame should be divorced from Beirut."

Taking the reference to Beirut out of the film particularly galled Eastwood, but he did it anyway. In his November 19 letter to Sims, Eastwood wrote: "As to Grenada, all references to Beirut were removed from the script even though we thought it was a rather silly request to ignore a fact of history."

But despite these and other changes Eastwood agreed to make, Sims was still not satisfied, and when he found out during the last two days of shooting that other changes he'd asked for had not been made, he told General Boomer that the Marines working on the film should be ordered off the set.

“We had the sense that he was not doing what we had asked, and there was some indication that we would withdraw support,” recalls Sims.

This made Eastwood so mad that he called the White House to try to get his old friend, Pres. Ronald Reagan, to intercede. Eastwood couldn’t get Reagan on the phone, but a few hours later, General Boomer—who five years later would go on to lead the Marines during the Gulf War—called Eastwood to see what was going on. After talking with Eastwood, Boomer was convinced that Eastwood was an honorable man, and that Eastwood’s dispute with Sims over what would or would not be changed was due to a “misunderstanding” and not because Eastwood was trying to deceive the Marines or the DOD, as Sims believed.

“On Wednesday, 23 July, I had a 15-minute telephone conversation with Mr. Clint Eastwood concerning the film, ‘Heartbreak Ridge,’” General Boomer told Sims in a memo. “After talking with Mr. Eastwood, it became apparent to me that there’s a misunderstanding between Eastwood and ASD-PA [Assistant Secretary of Defense—Public Affairs] concerning changes that were to be made to the film in order to obtain DOD approval.”

General Boomer went on to tell Sims that Eastwood “stated emphatically that he had never agreed to make all of the changes, but that he had promised to do the best he could, and he felt that he had done that. He cited specific changes that he had made to tone down the language and the violence. . . . My concerns were alleviated somewhat, in that I do not believe he has deliberately deceived us, or has manipulated DOD to his own benefit.”

General Boomer then told Sims that “In view of the fact that only two days of shooting remained when I talked to Mr. Eastwood, it seemed pointless to withdraw Marine Corps support. The ill will that would have been generated probably would have harmed DOD and Malpasco Productions in the long run. I informed the Commandant of the Marine Corps of what had transpired, and he agreed that it would not be wise to withdraw support. . . . From the beginning, the Marine Corps believed ‘Heartbreak Ridge’ was worth supporting. We still feel that way, it just makes us a little nervous.”

And at the end of their conversation, Eastwood told Boomer that he’d put in another call to the White House and ask them to disregard his earlier call, which he did.

That calmed things down long enough for Eastwood to finish the last

two days of shooting on the film, but four months later, when the film was screened at the Pentagon, all hell broke loose, and Sims and Eastwood quickly renewed their feud.

After the screening, Sims told Eastwood that “if you seek Defense Department cooperation in the future, it will be necessary to have a final script approval, or at least a more binding commitment than we had in this case, before any cooperation will be authorized.”

That really set Eastwood off.

“Your threat to close down this film during progress via General Boomer was less than noble indeed,” Eastwood told Sims in his November 19 letter, which he carbon copied to President Reagan and to Sims’s boss, Secretary of Defense Casper Weinberger. “And, as to the last paragraph of your letter about seeking DOD cooperation in the future, please be advised that this will not happen as long as you are the Assistant Secretary.”

Sims recalls that in a telephone conversation with Eastwood, the actor even threatened to ruin his career at the Pentagon.

“He threatened me over the phone that he would take this matter up with the White House and his friend President Reagan, and that it would cost me dearly—that he would damage my career, or end it,” Sims recalls.

Sims, however, wasn’t worried. He had been appointed assistant secretary of defense by Reagan himself, and had worked in the White House as special assistant to the president.

“I was not upset because I had just come from the White House and I was confident that my connections with the White House were as good as his,” recalls Sims, who left the DOD a year after his battle with Eastwood. “The whole episode was an unpleasant one. Who wants to be threatened by Dirty Harry?”

Eastwood had had trouble with Sims from the very beginning of the project. A year earlier, Eastwood had asked the army for the tanks and helicopters he’d need for the film since the character he’d be playing was originally written as a tough old army paratrooper who’d won the Medal of Honor in Korea but who was now having trouble fitting into the “new Army.”

But Sims hadn’t liked the script any more when Eastwood gave it to the army than he would a year later when he gave it to the Marines, and he told the army to turn Eastwood down unless he made major changes to the script.

Eastwood wasn't too happy about that, either.

In James Carabatsos' original script, the film, which is set in the 1980s, starts with Eastwood's character, Sgt. Thomas Highway—a grizzled veteran of too many wars and too many whores—sitting in the drunk tank telling war stories to the other drunks. Right away, we see that Sergeant Highway is an anachronism—a throwback to the “old Army.”

“Yeah, I been pumpin’ pussy since Christ was a corporal,” Highway grumbles to the other inattentive drunks, who couldn’t care less. “And I’m here to tell you, the best damned poontang paid for was in the Big Puddle, Central Highlands. Compliments of the First Cav. The girls were checked out daily, and we got laid in a safe, orderly, proficient military manner. That is, till some suckhead writes home to mama and tells her he dipped his wick in the Republic of Viet Nam.”

A drunken teenager sits on the floor beside the crusty veteran and listens to his story.

“Well, kid,” Highway continues without missing a beat, “the shit hit the fan, and a committee of congressmen—who asshole-to-asshole ain’t worth a beer fart in a windstorm—they try to tell your basic ass-in-the-grass paratrooper, ‘No more short time.’ We, of course, respond in the true Airborne tradition. We salute, do an about-face, and haul ass back to your basic boom-boom garbage dump to develop the clap, the drip, the crabs and a generally poor attitude toward the female of the species. It ain’t pretty, kid. But war is hell, and ain’t that the goddamned truth?”

True, yes, but apparently too true for Sims and the army. They told Eastwood that the opening scene would have to go. It was not only offensive to women, but it was also offensive to Congress, who, after all, paid their bills.

“Highway’s comments on page 2, regarding the ‘basic Airborne tradition and generally poor attitude toward the female of the species’ is in poor taste and adds nothing to the story line,” wrote Col. Miguel E. Monteverde Sr., chief of the army’s Policy & Plans Division, in a December 16, 1985, memo to Assistant Secretary of Defense Sims.

The memo also noted that “today’s Army generally is highly regarded and well supported by the Congress of the United States. The comments on page 2 of the script will serve only to alienate the U.S. Congress and are unnecessary.”

Why did Monteverde, who later went to work for Sims at the Depart-

ment of Defense, want the crack about Congress deleted? "He would have probably been concerned about congressional relations," says Sims. "If the army's name is going to be on the film, I suppose some congressman could say, 'How could you let them do that?'"

Carabatsos, the screenwriter, feels that Eastwood had good reason to be angry about Sims's meddling with the script.

"No wonder Eastwood went through the roof," says Carabatsos, who based the story of congressmen shutting down a whorehouse on a true story he'd heard while serving in the army in Vietnam. "You could see why he got so pissed, and justifiably so."

Eastwood stuck to his guns and refused to change a word of his character's opening monologue. Who were these guys to tell him he couldn't make fun of Congress? Since when was that anybody's job at the Pentagon?

But that wasn't all the army wanted changed. They said that the foul language in the script was "unwarranted," and they gave him a virtual laundry list of changes they wanted made before they'd agree to help him.

"The script presents the Army, especially the Airborne community, in a highly unfavorable and inaccurate light," Monteverde wrote in his memo to Sims. "The writers have taken a number of Hollywood stereotypes of military personnel from the World War II era and portrayed modern soldiers according to these stereotypes. The general conditions which might have existed in World War II and the Korean War no longer prevail in today's Army."

But that's just the point, Eastwood told the army. The movie was about an old soldier who'd won the Medal of Honor during the Korean War and who now didn't fit into the "new Army." But the army didn't get it.

They didn't even get the title.

"The title of the script is of Korean War vintage and is misleading, since the story is about the Army of the 1980's," Monteverde told Sims.

But again, that was just the point. And besides, Eastwood told the army, it was only a movie.

"One point that is being missed on the 'Heartbreak Ridge' script is that Sergeant Highway is a throwback to the *old* Army, completely out of step with 'today's' Army to the point where it has affected his personal as well as his military life, and he does have trouble adapting to the new Army," Eastwood wrote in a letter, dated December 17, 1985, to Maj. Gen. Charles Bussey, the army's chief of public affairs.

Then Eastwood went on the attack.

"I would like to point out that although the new Army is probably superior to the old Army, there must be *some* virtues in the old Army, and with all respect for the men who served and gave their lives in two world wars—Korea and Vietnam—I don't think that memory should be discarded," he told General Bussey. "Again, it is just a movie we're making and not a training film; and at present day the only image of the military man out there for the general public is Rambo. This film will be a terribly patriotic film touching on American's involvement and conflicts of the present time—we would have it no other way."

Then Eastwood warned General Bussey that the army would be making a mistake if they made him make the movie without them—just as it had been a mistake for the navy five years earlier to force the producers of *An Officer and a Gentleman* to make that movie without its support.

"Ironically, during a meeting with Marty Elfand, the producer of 'An Officer and a Gentleman,' he informed me that the Navy's objections and eventual turn-down of his film were the exact comments we are receiving today," Eastwood told General Bussey. "As you know, the Navy was very chagrined in hindsight for not supporting the picture and enlistments in that particular branch of the Navy were up considerably after that film."

"It would be a shame for Sergeant Highway not to be in the service of the U.S. Army and the 82nd Airborne Division who participated in the rescue mission in Grenada."

The army tried to assure Eastwood that they understood what he was trying to do, and said they wanted to work with him to make a film that both he and they would be proud of.

"In the temporary absence of General Bussey, I am responding to your 17 December letter concerning the 'Heartbreak Ridge' script," wrote Brig. Gen. Richard B. Griffiths, the army's acting chief of public affairs, in a December 23, 1985, letter to Eastwood. "We can appreciate your view that we're missing the point about Sergeant Highway being 'a throwback to the *old* Army.' Believe me, we understand that. We also agree that the old Army had 'some virtues'—many, in fact. Like you, we want to preserve the memory and properly honor those who served and gave their lives in our nation's wars. And there's no question that we'd like to see you make a film that does this."

“Although we understand that ‘Heartbreak Ridge’ is intended to be neither a recruiting nor a training film, parts of the script are hard to accept. . . . However, as I believe General Bussey discussed with Mr. Manes [the film’s executive producer], we think these differences can be resolved to our mutual satisfaction. We certainly want to try.”

Eastwood agreed to tone down some of the vulgar language in the script, but that wasn’t enough to satisfy the army, so when their negotiations broke off, Eastwood decided to take the script to the Marine Corps and see if they would help him. After all, the Marines were famous in Hollywood for being more producer-friendly than any of the other service branches. And he knew from talking to his friend Marty Elfand that the Marine Corps had offered full production assistance to Elfand a few years earlier after the navy had declined to assist his production of *An Officer and a Gentleman*. The Marines had told Elfand that all he had to do was change the lead character, played by Richard Gere, from a navy aviation cadet to a Marine. And they wouldn’t even make him change the script much. He could even keep the scene that the navy objected to the most—the suicide of a young cadet who had washed out of flight school. “Hell,” a Marine Corps official is famous for having said to the producers, “if a cadet washes out of Marine flight school, he should commit suicide!”

Elfand declined the Corps’ offer for assistance because the screenwriter, a former navy officer, had based the script on his own experiences, and didn’t want to change the lead character from navy to Marine, so they made the film without any official assistance from the military, although the Marine Corps did help the producers without letting the DOD know about it. The director, Taylor Hackford, wanted a shot of a low-flying jet, so he asked the Marines if they would do it for him—strictly off the books—and they agreed. “They had Harrier jets and promised to do a low flyby,” Hackford recalls. “I had my cameras ready, and right on the dot, this Harrier came screaming by, flying really low.”

A few years later, the producers of *A Few Good Men* would also find the Marines eager to take part in a movie even after the navy had turned them down. Again, all they had to do was change Tom Cruise’s character from navy to Marine, but once again, the producers declined.

Eastwood, however, had no problem changing Sergeant Highway

from an army paratrooper to a Marine Corps gunnery sergeant, and when he took the script to the Marines, they quickly gave him the green light.\*

The Marine Corps liked the tough-as-nails character Eastwood would play in *Heartbreak Ridge*, but they also wanted him to tone down some of the foul language.

"We are presently providing pre-production assistance to the Malpaso Productions feature film 'Heartbreak Ridge,'" wrote Lt. Col. Fred Peck, the Marine Corps' technical advisor attached to the film, who noted in his internal memo, dated April 3, 1986, that "the Marine Corps is officially supporting this production for the positive image visibility it will provide."

Eastwood agreed to tone down some of the foul language in the script, but once again, he ran into problems with Robert Sims, assistant secretary of defense for public affairs.

No branch of the armed forces can unilaterally provide assistance to movie producers. They have to get clearance from the DOD first, and that meant getting the okay from Sims.

"The Marine Corps public affairs office in Los Angeles has worked closely with the producers and screenwriters in developing a mutually acceptable script," wrote Brig. Gen. D. E. P. Miller, General Boomer's

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\*For the record, the Marine Corps was the only branch of the armed forces to allow unrestricted access to their files for this book, allowing me to spend more than a month pouring over thousands of documents in their office in Los Angeles. "We've got nothing to hide," says Capt. Matt Morgan, who was then the head of the Marine Corps' film office in Los Angeles. The air force refused to allow me to look at any of their documents, and the navy and the army insisted that I file Freedom of Information Act requests to look at their files. Those documents either came back heavily censored or containing very little information. In the case of the army, before they allowed me to see their files, they removed all references in their correspondence with producers having to do with script changes they'd requested from producers.

"The comments on the scripts were removed from the files based on the advice of the DOD FOIA [Freedom of Information Act] officer, who said that since the comments are directed at specific lines in a copyrighted script, the comments contain copyrighted material and we do not have the authority to release such material to you," said Kathleen Ross, chief of the army's Public Affairs Office (PAO) in Los Angeles. "This finding came to me via Phil Strub [the head of the Pentagon's film office] and our Army PAO FOIA officer."

But Strub allowed author Lawrence Suid to see many of these very same files, copyrighted material and all. Strub did this because he knew that Suid was writing a book that the Pentagon would like—a book about how movies never portray the military very accurately. In fact, Suid even gave the updated version of his book, titled *Guts and Glory—Great American War Movies*, to Strub to read at the Pentagon before it was published. Suid, however, says that he did not "clear" his book with the Pentagon, as so many filmmakers have had to do with their scripts. "I resent your implication that I had to clear my book with the Pentagon," he says. "I have done no such thing. I have had Phil Strub and filmmakers both read portions of the manuscript to make sure I have the story correct."



predecessor as chief of the Corps' public affairs office at the Pentagon, in a memo to Sims. "The final product, while containing much objectionable language, otherwise benefits the image of the U.S. Armed Forces, particularly in the final climactic scene in Grenada."

Sims and his staff, however, didn't think that the language had been toned down enough to warrant DOD approval.

"Much of the language in the screenplay 'Heartbreak Ridge' is coarse and vulgar," wrote Air Force Col. J. L. Higgins, director of training policy in the Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense, in a memo to Sims dated April 28, 1986. "I would be reluctant for the Department to appear to sponsor such language."

The navy, which was also being asked for assistance, also objected to the foul language in the script. "The language employed is the worst encountered in any previous script submitted to this office," wrote Lt. Cdr. Charles R. Combs, director of the navy's production services division, in a memo, dated April 24, 1986, to Sims.

But vulgar language was not the Pentagon's only concern. Historical accuracy was another. When Eastwood turned to the Marine Corps for assistance after the army refused to help, a series of events began to unfold that would create a whirlwind of controversy.

In the original screenplay, Eastwood's army paratrooper, Sergeant Highway, had won the nation's highest military honor—the Medal of Honor—at the Battle of Heartbreak Ridge during the Korean War. So when Eastwood changed the lead character from army to Marine to get the Marine Corps' assistance, the script still called for Sergeant Highway to have won the Medal of Honor at the battle for which the film was named.

Trouble is, the actual battle of Heartbreak Ridge had been fought almost entirely by the army—most notably by its Second Infantry Division—two of whose members were posthumously awarded the Medal of Honor. The Marines did fight at the battle of the Punchbowl in the vicinity of Heartbreak Ridge, but army purists note that those are actually two separate battles. And one thing is certain: no Marine received the Medal of Honor for fighting at Heartbreak Ridge.

So when word began to spread that Eastwood had changed his hero from an army paratrooper to a Marine Corps gunnery sergeant, army veterans of the actual battle sent up a howl of protest, complaining bitterly

that Eastwood was attempting to rewrite history. Several angry veterans wrote letters to Congress and to the Department of Defense, and the controversy found its way into the newspaper.

Even General P. X. Kelley, the commandant of the Marine Corps, got into the fray, urging Eastwood to rename the movie after a battle that the Marines had fought in Korea.

"I am convinced that the title is a disservice to the Army veterans who fought there so valiantly," Kelley told Eastwood in a letter dated July 31, 1986. "In that regard, I support those groups who have asked you for the title change, and strongly urge that you rename the film. There were many Marine battles in Korea from which you might choose a title. 'Nagaru' and 'Koto-ri,' or 'Chosin' are a few that come to mind."

Now it was getting ridiculous. Eastwood was not going to change the name of his movie to *Koto-ri* or to *Nagaru* or to any other unpronounceable Korean War battle site. How would that look on a theater marquee? And besides, Heartbreak Ridge had a double meaning. His movie wasn't about the Korean War at all, but rather, it was about a brokenhearted old Marine who wanted to get his ex-wife back.

So after talking to a few of the real-life army veterans of the battle of Heartbreak Ridge, Eastwood decided on a compromise. He would dub a line of dialogue into the film explaining that Sergeant Highway had been in the army at the battle of Heartbreak Ridge, and then joined the Marines after the war.

That seemed to satisfy everybody—even Sims. But there were other problems. At the end of the movie, Sergeant Highway and his Marines take part in the U.S. invasion of Grenada, and rescue some American medical students who are trapped on the island. But in real life, it was not the Marines, but the army—once again—who rescued the students. So Sims wanted Eastwood to fictionalize the war and the island.

"In order to avoid inaccuracies which would give the company difficulty in rewriting, it will be in the best interest of the DOD, the Marine Corps and Malpasco to make the story entirely fictional with the action taking place on a fictional island in the Caribbean," Sims wrote in a memo to the director of the Marine Corps' public affairs office.

Sims also objected to a scene in which a Marine uses a credit card to call headquarters back in the states to call for support. It has been widely

reported that such a call was made. Indeed, it was even reported in *Stars and Stripes*, the army's official newspaper. But Sims said it was a myth, and he wanted it removed from the script.

"This story has been told so many times that it would tie the fictional revision closely with erroneous stories concerning Grenada," Sims wrote in a memo. "Approval for its inclusion in the present Grenada action would not be authorized. Therefore, it must not be used in the new version."

Eastwood, however, refused to take the credit card scene out of the script. "If it is pure fiction," he told Sims, "how does it all of a sudden belong to the DOD?"

Sims also wanted Eastwood to take out a scene in which a quartermaster supply sergeant tries to get Sergeant Highway to "look the other way" so that he can continue his black-market operations.

Early on in the script, before Sergeant Highway is transferred back to his old Recon unit, he is stuck in a desk job at a Marine Corps supply depot. The quartermaster is a crook, and he wants Eastwood to join his criminal enterprise.

"I can always use another friend," the supply sergeant tells Highway, offering him a contraband Cuban cigar. "See, for instance, if your pencil wasn't quite so sharp and your eyesight not so clear around here, I could make your lot in the military life a damn sight comfier. Not to mention downright rewardin'."

Highway glares at the quartermaster, and tells him that he's not going to have any part in such schemes. "You best take that contraband stogie out of my face before I ram it so far up your ass you'll have to set fire to your nose to light it," Highway says with a scowl.

This scene showed that Highway, although often drunk and disorderly, was an honest man. But Sims wanted the scene eliminated because it showed that not every one in the military was so virtuous. "The sequence implies that military personnel are 'on-the-take' and raises the question of missing parts and black market operations," Sims wrote in his memo. "This should be deleted or revised, to eliminate that type of image that we have sought to avoid, both real and perceived."

Never mind that there really is graft and corruption in the military, just as there is everywhere else in the world.

But once again, Eastwood refused to budge, and Sims ultimately

relented. "As I recall from our phone conversation," Eastwood told Sims, "you had changed your mind on this as the scene shows that our hero would never be 'on the take' from the U.S. military under any circumstances."

But Sims's biggest problem with the movie was that it showed Sergeant Highway committing a war crime. Toward the end of the movie, after the Marines storm ashore on Grenada, they encounter stiff resistance from Cuban soldiers, who have taken over the island. Highway shoots a Cuban soldier, and as the Cuban lays moaning facedown on the ground, Highway finishes him off with a blast from his machine gun.

The Pentagon hates it when movie heroes commit war crimes, and can always be counted on to urge the filmmakers to delete those scenes, as it did with the producers of *Windtalkers* and *The Green Berets*. And to make matters worse for Sims, he first learned of this scene when the finished film was screened for him at the Pentagon on November 14, 1986.

In a letter to Fritz Manes, the film's executive producer, Sims wrote: "The film includes a scene in which Gunnery Sergeant Highway shoots an enemy soldier in the back—after the enemy has been wounded and effectively incapacitated as an aggressor. Highway would be subject to court-martial for such an act, based on the provisions of the Geneva Convention. Because I seriously doubt you intend to have your hero commit a war crime in the execution of his mission, I urge you to consider deleting the few seconds of footage in which this action occurs."

But Eastwood refused to delete the scene and it remained in the picture.

"I remember very well the approval screening at the Pentagon, in our screening room," Sims recalls. "There must have been twenty or so people there. Those who were there expected to like the film, and wanted to like it. Alas, we could not. The language and content of the show was so offensive to my administrative assistant, who had worked for me at the White House and in the Pentagon, that she walked out midway through the show."

Sims blames Lt. Col. Fred Peck, the Marine Corps' liaison officer assigned to watch over the film's production, as much for the mess as he blames Eastwood.

"My entire staff felt that we had been misled by the Marine Corps liaison officer in Hollywood," Sims says. "After the screening, we realized that the key things that the Marines had said would be fixed during

shooting had not been dealt with, that the producer and director had ignored the conditions set for cooperation, that there was absolutely no intention on the producer's part to change anything."

But Peck was often as confused as Sims about what was going on. According to a Marine Corps memo, Peck himself wasn't even sure which changes had been made and which hadn't. That memo, written several months after production had been completed, noted that Peck "is uncertain whether all requested changes have been made. For example, a number of scenes were shot several times and the dialogue—some of it ad libbed—changed from take-to-take. Some contained objectionable profanity and some did not. Additionally, much dialogue will be dubbed during post-production. As far as we know, direct references to Beirut and Grenada have been deleted and the film is entirely fictional." Indeed, the filmmaking process itself may have been more to blame for the misunderstandings because movies are not something that can be made according to military specifications—at least not when independent-minded artists are involved.

And that, perhaps, is where Sims and the Pentagon made their biggest mistake: they underestimated Clint Eastwood's artistic integrity.

Joseph Stinson, a screenwriter who was brought in to do some rewrites on the film, feels that Sims didn't understand Eastwood any more than he understood the movie or the moviemaking process.

"Clint has strong convictions," says Stinson, who wrote *Sudden Impact* and the famous line "Go ahead, make my day" for Eastwood. "Movies are always changing. You gotta make changes. He is not in any sense of the word unreasonable about adapting to changes. But he believes in the truth of character and the truth of a story, and he would never compromise the integrity of the story or the characters."

The Pentagon, however, has no qualms about urging filmmakers to compromise the integrity of their stories. Some filmmakers cave in, and some, like Eastwood, do not.

As Leonard Hirshan, Eastwood's longtime agent, puts it, "There are a lot of whores in this business, but Clint Eastwood is not one of them."

# ★ CHAPTER 31 ★

## “IS THAT NOT PROPAGANDA?”

The cast and crew of the 1980 CBS movie *A Rumor of War* had to get out of Villahermosa fast. There had been a brawl in the Mexican oil town’s seedy disothèque the night before and several of the film’s young actors—and three of the real-life U.S. Marines assigned to work on the picture—had been arrested. The producers sprang their boys from the Mexican jail the next morning, but now there was talk that some local toughs were arming themselves and would be coming back for revenge.

“Some of the actors felt fearful,” recalls David Manson, the film’s producer.

So Manson and his production team hurriedly packed up their gear, rounded up their cast and crew, and beat it out of town. They would finish the shoot in the safer surroundings of Puerto Vallarta, the Mexican resort town.

The movie, which was based on Pulitzer Prize-winning journalist Philip Caputo’s memoirs of his days as a Marine in Vietnam, had been a difficult production from the very start, beginning the previous summer, in 1979, at the Pentagon. Manson needed the Pentagon’s assistance to make the film, so he submitted the script to the Pentagon for approval. The Marine Corps, however, wasn’t at all happy with the way it was being depicted in the script.

“While we recognize the sensitivities inherent in portraying American

involvement in the Vietnam War, we find the overall tenor of 'Rumor of War' to be negative toward both the Marine Corps and the American Vietnam veteran," wrote Col. H. M. Hart, the Marine Corps' deputy director of information, after reading the script. "In our opinion, it is not a balanced portrayal of war and does an injustice to those many Vietnam era veterans who behaved heroically and honorably in combat despite the frustrating nature of jungle warfare and the trauma of combat. It is therefore, not considered to be in the best interests of the Marine Corps or the DOD to either support or render assistance to the subject motion picture as it is currently written."

The Marines, however, were willing to make a deal.

"We are not adverse to a meeting with the producers to discuss our objections to the film script in more detail if the producers desire such a meeting," Hart wrote in his letter to the assistant secretary of defense. "Although our objections are substantial, a meeting would provide an opportunity for the producers and representatives of this office to discuss the problem areas in the screenplay and perhaps arrive at mutually agreeable substantive changes in the script that might warrant reconsideration for some support."

Don Baruch, head of the Pentagon's film office, was dubious. He didn't think that Manson would play ball.

"In our opinion," he told the head of the Marine Corps' information branch, "the producer will not be receptive to make all the changes we believe you will desire. Nevertheless, the attempt should be made and the final outcome evaluated."

Baruch was right. Manson was not willing to make all the changes the Marines wanted, but he was willing to make quite a few.

Manson had to walk a tightrope between satisfying the military and remaining true to the original source material. After all, Caputo's book, *A Rumor of War*, was not a work of fiction; it was an account of Caputo's actual experiences in Vietnam. And much of it wasn't pretty, including Caputo's acknowledgment that he'd taken part in a war crime.

"This book is not a work of the imagination," Caputo wrote in the book's prologue. "The events related are true, the characters real."

Even so, the Marines wanted major script changes. So Manson flew to Washington, DC, to see if he could make a deal. Meeting him at the airport when he arrived was Maj. Pat Coulter, the head of the Marine Corps' film office in Los Angeles.

“I took a red-eye and met Pat Coulter at the airport and we went to breakfast,” Manson recalls. “He sort of gave me the lay of the land.”

Manson had a friend in Coulter, who was used to dealing with movie people. Coulter knew how to get things done. And he respected filmmakers. So after breakfast, Manson and Coulter went over to the Pentagon and met with the top brass in the Marine Corps’ office of public information.

“Basically what unfolded was several hours of negotiations and we went through the script point-by-point and negotiated out the issues they had,” Manson recalls. “And there was one particular concern that they had involving the forging of awards.”

In screenwriter John Sacret Young’s original screenplay, Lieutenant Caputo and two of his stoned Marine Corps buddies are shown sitting around headquarters typing up a phony Silver Star commendation for their much-despised senior officer, Major Ball. It’s a funny but purely fictional scene, one that’s not in Caputo’s book—and the Marine Corps hated it.

“This was a really dicey issue for them,” Manson recalls. “They did not want the scene in the film, and I felt very strongly that it was an important scene and did not want to give it up. They said, ‘You’re not going to get our approval unless this scene goes. Period.’ I said, ‘Let’s table this issue and come back to it later.’”

So they went on to other issues, and four hours later came back to the question of whether or not the Marine Corps would allow the filmmakers to show officers in Vietnam making up phony commendations for the Silver Star, one of the highest medals the military has to offer.

In the end, they settled on a compromise.

“We came back to this issue of the decorations,” Manson recalls, “and I managed to come up with a way where I retained the scene, but made it seem more like they were fantasizing how they would write up these decorations. I felt I could do it in a way that would solve their problem from a literal standpoint—where they could say they were just fantasizing about this, but that in viewing it, the viewer would have the same response as if you had viewed the scene as originally written. It was palliative—a softening—effect, but in fact, I didn’t think it would make much difference.”

And that’s what finally made it into the film—a softened version of



the decorations scene in which Caputo and his friends—who are no longer stoned on pot—fantasize about writing up a phony Silver Star for Major Ball.

“I suppose ultimately nobody is forcing a filmmaker to link up with the military,” Manson says philosophically. “You have to decide whether you are making a film or propaganda. Most serious filmmakers are not going to allow themselves to be used as instruments of propaganda, but there is a quid pro quo and you can’t go into it expecting that there won’t be one. My experience told me that this was ground you could traverse without destroying the *raison d’être* that you had for doing the project in the first place.

“Obviously, you have to know what’s important from a creative point of view, and you have to hold on to that. Inevitably, there is pressure that is going to be brought to bear to water down or completely alter and reverse the meaning of scenes that are critical of the military. But at the same time, there is an implicit understanding that both sides need the other, and so you try to find enough common ground so that both sides can walk away and say, ‘OK, it was worth doing.’ And I certainly think that that was the case with our film.”

Even so, a little bit of censorship is still censorship.

The film’s screenwriter, John Sacret Young, says that filmmakers should be very careful when dealing with the military.

“If you want support from them, they feel they have a right to say what material goes into the script,” he says. “That’s the quid pro quo they fight for. That’s why people sometimes don’t go for official approval, because they feel that they have to be more careful, that they can’t say what they want to say. It’s usually about money—at least, from the Hollywood stance. Where do you find the equipment, the planes, the jeeps, and the tanks to put in your movie? If you get the equipment from them, it’s going to look better, but in return for that, they want to see the script and make sure it is not antimilitary.

“In this case, it got down to that one scene. Their attitude was that they don’t want to do anything that’s demeaning to the Marine Corps. The attitude that I have found is: Circle the wagons. Anything you can think of that might be offensive or taken the wrong way, they want out. It’s like dealing with lawyers. They can manufacture how the word ‘and’ could be derogatory to the interests of the United States.

“Ultimately, it came down to much ado about very little. It led us to a scene that was just as powerful as the scene we had originally written. When you see the medal sequence, there is a certain surreal quality to it. And the negotiations had a surreal aspect. What they intended to censor, they largely lost, and the scene is still very strong and very telling. Obviously, their goal is to protect the Corps, and that means that they don’t want you to do something radical or outside what they would approve of. Is that not censorship?”

This was the first time that Young had to deal with the military on a film, but it wouldn’t be the last. In 1998, he wrote a movie for Showtime called *Thanks of a Grateful Nation*, a story about the battle that veterans and their families had to fight to get the military establishment to recognize the existence of Gulf War syndrome, a mysterious rash of illnesses suffered by veterans of the 1991 Persian Gulf War.

The producers didn’t bother to ask the Defense Department for assistance, and they didn’t send their script to the Pentagon either, because they already knew the Pentagon’s position on Gulf War syndrome.

“The DOD denied that veterans got sick from the Gulf War,” Young says. “But 100,000 veterans were reporting symptoms. After the film came out, Senator Robert Byrd introduced a bill to help veterans get medical benefits, and in December 2001 the DOD admitted in the *New York Times* that the number of Lou Gehrig cases was significantly higher for Gulf War vets.”

And just as the Pentagon had refused to lend assistance a decade earlier to the producers of *My Father, My Son*, a TV movie about the harmful side effects of a chemical defoliant used during the Vietnam War called Agent Orange, the producers of *Thanks of a Grateful Nation* knew that the Pentagon wouldn’t help them either. But they hoped that the Department of Veterans Affairs—a separate agency from the Defense Department altogether—might be more sympathetic, or at least less inclined to try and censor a movie whose point of view they didn’t necessarily share, and let them shoot some of their picture in an actual VA hospital.

Not only did the VA refuse to provide any assistance, but according to Young, the Pentagon somehow also got its hands on his script for *Thanks of a Grateful Nation*.

“We didn’t show them the script, but they got one,” Young says.

But that raises the question: By what authority is the Pentagon acquiring and reading scripts that haven't even been submitted to them for assistance?

Indeed, the DOD's own files show that the Pentagon regularly tracks the development of films that the Pentagon hasn't even been asked to approve, and "keeps tabs" on films that have been denied Pentagon assistance.

In 1981, the Pentagon declined to help the producers of *An Officer and a Gentleman* after the navy determined that the film did not paint a very positive picture of the navy's aviator training program. "Production assistance offers no benefit to the service, rather, it is damaging to the Navy and to its recruiting effort," the navy said in an internal memo. Then, in March of 1981, as the film was getting ready to go into production, another navy memo noted: "If the producers stick to the script we rejected, the film could have a distinct adverse impact on our community relations efforts in Pensacola. NAVINFO LA [Navy's Office of Information, Los Angeles] plans to keep tabs on the film as production proceeds."

But is that a proper role for the military? Should the navy be allowed to spy on movie productions in which it has no involvement?

# ★ CHAPTER 32 ★

## SANITIZING *THE GREAT SANTINI*

The book landed on the brigadier general's desk at the Pentagon with a plop. Some Hollywood producer wanted to make a movie out of it, and the commandant of the Marine Corps wanted a book report. He wanted to know if a movie based on the book would be in the best interests of the Corps.

The general took the 440-page novel home and read it over several days. Written by Pat Conroy, *The Great Santini* told the story of Conroy's coming of age as the son of a legendary Marine Corps aviator whose real-life nickname was The Great Santini. The largely autobiographical book was so true-to-life that when the author's mother filed for divorce, she presented her son's book as evidence to prove how difficult her husband had been to live with.

The general liked the book, but believed that turning it into a movie would definitely not be in the Marines Corps' best interest. The lead character, called Bull Meechum in the book, was presented as a colorful character and a modern American hero, but he was also a wife-beater who abused his children. And the book made fun of the navy. Even worse, a drill instructor is shown terrorizing his young recruits, pretending to murder one of them. That would definitely not be good to show in a movie—not with all the recent bad publicity the newspapers had drummed up about alleged brutality at Marine Corps boot camps.

"The book is highly authentic in detail," the general wrote in his book

report, dated February 11, 1977. "We find it both entertaining and scandalous. . . . It is upbeat toward the Corps, but in view of the recent incidents involving recruit training, it could ill serve the Marine Corps' efforts at telling the story of 'firmness, fairness and dignity' in recruit training. Specifically, we refer to the fake shooting incident where the 'recruit' is 'shot' by his drill instructor. Other incidents of concern are wife beating, child abuse and negative references to the Navy and Naval Academy. Accordingly, Marine Corps support of a motion picture on this book, as written, would be inappropriate and not in the best interest of the Corps at this time."

The general signed the report and sent it up through the channels. The report made its rounds at the Pentagon, and a few days later, it arrived at the desk of Maj. H. J. Collins, head of the Marine Corps' film liaison office in Los Angeles. It would be Collins's job to call the producer, Charles Pratt, president of Bing Crosby Productions, and tell him the bad news.

Pratt was stunned. He'd bought the book's movie rights fully expecting that the Marines would love it and agree to help him make the movie. And now this. Well, he would just have to do what producers do best—negotiate a deal.

So Pratt fired off a letter to Don Baruch, Major Collins's boss at the Pentagon, assuring him that he and the screenwriter, Lewis Carlino, could come up with a script that would make everybody happy.

"It is our intention to soften the character of Bull Meechum somewhat from the individual described in the novel," Pratt told Baruch in a letter dated February 16, 1977. "I want to assure you that Bing Crosby Productions expects to make a movie which will be a credit to the Corps and boost recruiting of the right sort of men."

And when Carlino finished writing the first draft of the screenplay on July 25, Pratt had it delivered to Major Collins with a note that said: "There may be some scenes to which the USMC will object. In this regard, Bing Crosby Productions is willing to compromise somewhat in re-structuring objectionable sequences. We feel, however, that the script, as written, is a superior piece of work and will reflect positively on the image of the Corps."

Major Collins, however, didn't like the screenplay any more than his bosses back at the Pentagon liked the book. First of all, he told Pratt, the

seven-page scene in which the drill instructor terrorizes the recruits would have to go.

Pratt and Carlino wanted to keep the scene in the movie; it helped flesh out the character of Bull Meechum, and it was one of the funniest scenes in Pat Conroy's book. But the Marine Corps had them over a barrel.

"You couldn't make the picture without military assistance," says Carlino, who also directed the film. "Where you gonna get the F-4s? Where you gonna get the military bases, the flight maneuvers, the fly-overs? There's no way."

So when the Marines told the producers to cut the drill instructor scene, they had few options. The offending scene was what the Pentagon calls a "show stopper," and it was clear that the Marines weren't going to change their minds. They could either take it out, or they could take a hike. Reluctantly, Carlino went to work killing the offending scene and replacing it with some dialogue between Bull Meechum's children.

Pratt sent Major Collins the new sanitized version of the script on August 8, with a note that said: "Lewis Carlino wrote these changes to satisfy your concerns about the Drill Instructor scene and how it might reflect adversely on the USMC Recruiting Program. Frankly, I hate to lose the D.I. scene as I've always felt it was one of the funnier sequences in the picture; however, we recognize the importance of the USMC cooperation and have made this sacrifice."

In the original screenplay, Bull Meechum takes his son, Ben, to a Marine Corps base on the morning of his eighteenth birthday in the hope that he will sign up and follow in his old man's footsteps. Bull wants his son to see a prank that an old DI buddy of his is going to pull on the new recruits. The DI pretends to shoot a recruit—who is actually a fellow DI disguised as a recruit—and then forces the other recruits to throw his still squirming body into a dumpster. All this is done in good fun and for the amusement of Bull Meechum, who loves a practical joke. But the DI also wants to teach his recruits a lesson—that he is the boss, and that his orders must be followed, no matter what. At the end of the scene, the DI tells Meechum that this lesson will turn the recruits into the best platoon on the base, making them "tough enough to hold off half the Russian army."

Seven pages of the script were cut to satisfy the Marines in order to get their cooperation. In its place, Carlino wrote a soliloquy for Bull in

which he reminisces about the day his son was born eighteen years earlier, and about how he'd hoped that his son would follow in his footsteps into the Corps. Carlino also added some amiable chit-chat between Ben and his young sister in which they ponder their futures—which for Ben does not include a stint in the Marines.

This is the scene from *The Great Santini* that the Marine Corps didn't want you to see. It is seen here for the first time ever.

#### EXTERIOR BIDDLE ISLAND TRAINING DEPOT GATE—DAWN

A guard salutes them [Bull and Ben] as they drive past. The car moves down a main road that turns into a causeway crossing a vast marsh. The marsh stretches for miles on either side of the road with ominous symmetry. A group of barracks comes into view and the car passes them, then moves into the shadows beneath a live oak directly in front of B barracks. In front of the car, a parade ground stretches for two miles.

#### INTERIOR CAR—DAWN

Bull lights a cigarette, hands it to Ben, then lights one for himself and smokes in silence, looking at the barracks.

BEN

I don't smoke, Dad.

BULL

Go ahead, try it. You've probably been sneaking smokes for years.

BEN

No, really. I haven't. I thought you'd kill me.

BULL

That's affirmative. Wait a minute. Put it out. Here comes Hicks and the boys. What you're gonna see is top secret. You ready?

BEN

Roger.

CAMERA to their POV. From the barracks, unintelligible shouts and obscenities pour from the windows.

BEN

Sounds like our house when you get home.

BULL

Quiet!

He breaks into a half-suppressed giggle.

EXTERIOR BARRACKS—DAWN

Recruits with shaved heads, combat boots, fatigue hats and new military issue T-shirts, spill out into the front of the barracks and line up, without skill, at the edge of the parade ground, not fifteen yards away from the car. A drill instructor, Sergeant Hicks, appears in the doorway. He is carrying a swagger stick and has a revolver strapped to his hip. He wears a look of malevolence and formidability as though it is part of his uniform.

INTERIOR CAR—DAWN

BULL

That's Hicks. One of the last of the great cannibals.

EXTERIOR PARADE GROUND—DAWN

Hicks walks up and down in front of the recruits, slapping his swagger stick in his palm.

HICKS

Can you hear me, turds?

PLATOON

Yes, sergeant!

HICKS

That's good. Because I want you to hear me real good this morning.



INTERIOR CAR—DAWN

BULL (suppressing laughter)

There's Blakely, another D.I. Fourth row, third one back.

BEN

Why's he dressed like a recruit?

BULL

Just watch.

HICKS (continuing his harangue)

It makes me sick to my stomach that maggots like you can pollute an elite group of fighting men like the US Marine Corps. When I look at you and I think about you wearing the uniform of the corps I want to walk up and strangle the guts out of every one of you abortions! Do I make myself clear?

PLATOON

Yes, sergeant!

Suddenly, Hicks moves to the first rank and addresses a large, well-built recruit, who takes a step backward in surprise, so sudden is the attack.

HICKS

You think you can whip my ass, don't you, grunt?

RECRUIT

No, sergeant!

HICKS

Don't lie to me, you brainless sack of Kotex. You told your bunkmate last night that I was the biggest asshole you've ever seen. Isn't that right?

RECRUIT

No, sergeant!

HICKS

You don't think I'm an asshole?

RECRUIT

No, sergeant!

HICKS

Well, what am I? You think I'm a ballerina? Or a hairdresser? It's my job to be an asshole, twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week, fifty-two weeks a year for the rest of my goddamn life. Now, grunt, tell the rest of these maggots what the sergeant is!

RECRUIT

The sergeant is an asshole!

Hicks lets out a blood-curdling scream.

INTERIOR CAR—DAWN

Bull and Ben, hands over their mouths, barely able to control their laughter.

EXTERIOR PARADE GROUND—DAWN

HICKS

You scum-sucking pig! If you ever call me that again I'll send you home to your mother in a hundred boxes. I'm gone be all . . .

Suddenly, someone in the platoon coughs. Hicks steps back in disbelief, his face contorted with fury. The platoon is motionless, soundless.

HICKS (continuing)

Which one of you worthless nits coughed? I will tell you no one in this platoon coughs, sneezes, burps or farts without my permission. Clear?

PLATOON

Yes, sergeant!

The cough comes again.

HICKS (screaming)

I see you, maggot! I see you! Beat feet up here, scumbag. You, yes you, scumbag! Before I tear your legs from your putrid body!

The third man in the fourth rank runs to the front of Hicks and stands trembling.

INTERIOR CAR—DAWN

Bull is choking his laughter.

BULL

That's Blakely . . . look. Look at him!

EXTERIOR PARADE GROUND—DAWN

Hicks begins circling Blakely.

HICKS

What am I gonna do, maggots? I try to be nice. I try to be fair. But I guess I just have to prove I mean what I say. I am pissed off, maggots. And when I get pissed off, I become a goddamn homicidal maniac. I told you not to cough, maggot. I warned you. It's your own fault.

Hicks unsnaps his holster and slowly draws his pistol.

HICKS

I hate to do this to you, grunt, but you pissed me off real bad.

Hicks begins shooting into Blakely's chest, firing in a calm, synchronized salvo that has a violent harmony to it.

INTERIOR CAR—DAWN

Ben's eyes go wide with shock.

BULL (laughing)

Beautiful . . . my God, he's beautiful . . .

EXTERIOR PARADE GROUND—DAWN

The recruits are frozen in terror. Blakely lies writhing on the ground, his chest covered in blood. Excruciating screams come from his throat. Hicks replaces his pistol calmly.

HICKS

You two men. Take this dead maggot and throw his ass into that Dempster-Dumpster.

Two recruits quickly move to Blakely, lift him by the arms and legs, and carry him to the garbage bin behind the barracks.

INTERIOR CAR—DAWN

As the men move by the car, Bull and Ben can hear Blakely screaming out his death pleas.

BLAKELY

No, fellas . . . help me, please . . . please . . . I'm only wounded. Don't do it. Please . . . !

But the recruits' terror of Hicks makes them deaf. They dump Blakely into the Dumpster, and race back toward the platoon. Blakely continues to scream over the sounds of cans and bottles being rattled against the side of the Dumpster.

BLAKELY

Oh . . . oh, God . . . help me someone . . . please . . .

HICKS

Sergeant Taylor!

A sergeant steps out from behind the barracks.

TAYLOR

Sergeant?

HICKS

March these maggots to breakfast.

TAYLOR

Ten'shun!

The platoon comes to attention. Some of the men are looking toward the Dumpster.

TAYLOR

Eyes front, grunts. Right face! Forward, march!

The platoon marches off like zombies. Not a head is turned. Hicks watches them a moment, then walks to the car. Bull and Ben get out. Bull and Hicks fall against the car, laughing. Ben rushes to the Dumpster and lifts the iron lid. Blakely climbs out and peels off his stained T-shirt, then throws it back into the Dumpster.

BLAKELY

Know something, son? Catsup is thicker than blood.

He salutes Bull, then blows Hicks a kiss and walks off toward the barracks.

HICKS (to Ben)

Happy birthday, Ben. You're old enough to be part of this platoon now. Wanna sign up?

BEN

No, sir. I think I'll wait.

HICKS

Now, Ben, what you saw is just between us girls. They'd hang me by my thumbs if they heard about this little training technique. I've already been busted for it once. I'll tell you one thing, though. That platoon will win

almost every award for excellence when they graduate from here. They'll also be tough enough to hold off half the Russian army.

BEN

I won't say anything, sergeant.

HICKS

Fine. Real fine. Good to see you, Colonel. (He salutes Bull) Excuse me. I've got to get back to my maggots and kind of de-traumatize them. Happy birthday again, Ben.

BEN

Thank you, sergeant.

Hicks walks off. Bull and Ben watch him for a moment.

BULL (shakes his head)

Yep, one of the last great cannibals.

They turn and enter the car.

#### END OF CENSORED SCENE

But even cutting this entire scene from the script wasn't enough to satisfy the Marine Corps, which wanted even more changes before they would assist the production. There was still the problem of the famous mushroom soup scene.

After receiving the new version of the script—which no longer contained the offensive drill instructor scene—Major Collins sent a memo to Gen. Louis Wilson, commandant of the Marine Corps, telling the nation's number one Marine “that the boot camp segment, although included in Pat Conroy's book, would be objectionable to the Marine Corps. Mr. Pratt agreed to take the scene out of the screenplay and replace it with the pink page changes in enclosure. It is evident from some private conversations I have had with Mr. Carlino and Mr. Pratt that those involved with ‘The Great Santini’ are willing to compromise because they recognize the importance of Marine Corps cooperation.”

Collins went on to note: "As in the book, the screenplay by Mr. Carlino does include the mushroom soup segment. Although Mr. Pratt is reluctant to omit the entire scene from the production, I am confident this segment, which will be offensive to some, can be toned down into an acceptable, funny episode."

In the film, Bull Meechum—played by Robert Duvall, who was nominated for an Oscar for his performance—is a fun-loving prankster who will do almost anything for a laugh. The film opens in a barroom scene in Spain in which Duval's men are giving him a drunken going-away party—he's being shipped back to the States. Their revelries are interrupted, however, when a stuffy navy captain comes into the bar and tells them all to quiet down, that they are disturbing a fancy navy party in the adjoining restaurant. In the original screenplay, after the navy captain tells Santini and his men to clear out of the bar, Santini comes up with an idea for a prank that will really put the captain—whom Duvall refers to as a "used jock strap"—in his place.

The gag is that The Great Santini has concealed a can of mushroom soup under his jacket, and when he and his men barge into the navy officers' party next door, Santini careens onto the stage and pretends to vomit, spilling the soup onto the floor. The navy officers and their wives are even more shocked when two of Santini's men—who are in on the joke—rush to the puddle of faux puke and begin to greedily spoon it into their mouths.

The navy, which is particularly sensitive about the depiction of officers, was absolutely dead set against an officer being referred to as "a used jockstrap," and wanted the entire mushroom soup scene deleted. The Marine Corps was willing to keep the scene, but in a move to mollify the navy asked the filmmakers to take out some of the more objectionable references to officers.

"The navy and the Marine Corps have two different interpretations about what officers should be like," Carlino says. "The navy is a bit concerned about the gentleman-class of officers."

But perhaps more than anything else, the film was saved, and Marine Corps cooperation was granted, because one man—Gen. Chesty Puller, the nation's most highly decorated Marine—had gotten wind of the project and was all for it.

"I think it was mainly through his influence that we got the [military's] cooperation," Carlino says. "He pushed really hard for it."

And if not for Puller, there might not have been a film called *The Great Santini*, which earned Carlino a nomination for best adapted screenplay from the Writers Guild of America; a best actor Oscar nomination for Duvall; and a best supporting actor Oscar nomination for Michael O'Keefe, who played Duvall's son.

In the end, *The Great Santini* is still a classic, but it's a watered-down, sanitized classic. And to get an idea of what's been lost by the sanitizing of hundreds of movies that the Pentagon has assisted, imagine what the films that the Pentagon refused to assist might have been like if they'd been subjected to the military's approval process. Imagine a "toned down" Jack D. Ripper, the mad army general obsessed with the purity of bodily fluids in Stanley Kubrick's *Dr. Strangelove*; or a "more positive" Colonel Kurtz, the insane renegade army officer in Francis Ford Coppola's *Apocalypse Now*; or a less bitter Ron Kovic, the paralyzed Vietnam War hero-turned-war resister in Oliver Stone's *Born on the Fourth of July*; or a less goofy, more soldierlike *Forrest Gump*. How would we have known if the producers of these films had toned down their characters in order to get the military's cooperation? And how would we have known that our movie-memories had been tampered with?





# ★ CHAPTER 33 ★

## “A WONDERFUL PUBLIC RELATIONS TOOL”

Producer Stanley Jaffe’s timing couldn’t have been worse. He wanted to make a movie for Columbia Pictures about a group of heavily armed cadets who take over their military academy and then hold off the National Guard in a brave attempt to keep their school from being closed. So in May of 1980 he formally asked the Pentagon for assistance.

The script he wanted to produce, called *Father Sky* and later renamed *Taps*, showed bloodthirsty National Guardsmen using overpowering military force against the rebellious students, aged twelve to eighteen, who in the end outsmart the leader of the Guard and capture him before they themselves surrender. It would star George C. Scott as the military school’s beloved commander, and Timothy Hutton as the cadet who leads the rebellion after the academy’s trustees decide to shut down the school. Ronnie Cox would be cast as the National Guard colonel ordered by the governor to take back the school, and Tom Cruise and Sean Penn, both in their first major film roles, would play young cadets with opposing views on the student uprising.

Unfortunately for Jaffe, the timing of his request for National Guard assistance coincided almost exactly with the tenth anniversary of the massacre at Kent State, where four student protesters were killed and nine others were wounded when the National Guard opened fired on them on May 4, 1970.

After reading the script, the National Guard said that it wanted nothing to do with such a project, which Guard officials felt was sure to remind the public of the unfortunate events at Kent State a decade earlier.

“After extensive review of the attached script, the National Guard Bureau, with the full agreement of the Adjutant General of Pennsylvania, has decided that our support of ‘Father Sky’ would be counterproductive to the best interests of the National Guard and the Department of Defense, and we therefore decline to support this particular production,” wrote Don Baruch, head of the Pentagon’s film office, in a May 20, 1980, letter to Jaffe. “The general theme of the work can only serve to reawaken public enmity for the National Guard as an enemy of young students and an invader of campuses. We have tried over the last ten years to put the incident at Kent State into the proper context. ‘Father Sky’ would depict the National Guard as preparing to crush young children with overwhelming military might. This is not the image we wish to project.”

Stung by the Pentagon’s criticism, Jaffe went to work with his writers to refashion the script into something that the National Guard could support. To the extent that the film was a parable for Kent State, the National Guard wanted it to be one that would be put into the “proper context”—the blame for the deaths of the students in the film should *not* be placed on overzealous and trigger-happy National Guardsmen, but should be firmly affixed to the students themselves.

In a letter to Baruch dated July 3, 1980, Jaffe wrote: “Attached please find the revised screenplay for the motion picture ‘Taps,’ formerly entitled ‘Father Sky.’ Fortunately, from our standpoint, when your people last saw the script they were kind enough to list their objections and concerns. Based on careful examination of their concerns, much work was done to the project.”

In the new script, Colonel Kerby, the National Guard commander, would be depicted as kinder and more compassionate—a friend of the students, not an enemy.

“I believe this present script is now accurate in the manner in which the National Guard would be used and, more important, I believe that the National Guard, especially as personified in the character of Kerby, is shown to be a voice of reason and intellect, of logic and of humanity,” Jaffe told Baruch. “Confronted with the reality of 100 boys armed and able to use the latest weaponry available, it is Kerby who looks for a

peaceful way to defuse the situation. When others are calling for an assault, it is Kerby who constantly reminds them that the adversary is a group of children, and must be dealt with accordingly; and finally, when the governor perceives the situation to call for action, it is Kerby who demands that his men not use their weapons unless it is absolutely necessary, or in their own self defense.”

Jaffe then addressed the Kent State issue.

“Mr. Baruch,” he wrote, “I realize that one of the objections voiced by you and your associates is that this movie would evoke images of Kent State. Kent State, unfortunately, is a reality and as a result of it people came away with negative feelings about the National Guard. I believe the way to counteract these feelings is to portray the National Guard as an organization manned by intelligent, humane members of society whose objective is to preserve the peace. I believe that ‘Taps’ does just this. I believe ‘Taps,’ rather than hurting the National Guard, will prove to be a wonderful public relations tool for it.”

The National Guard liked the revised script much better than the first one.

In the original script, just before he mounts his assault on the student’s fortified positions, Colonel Kerby tells his men to prepare the attack with a “tank barrage.”

“Captain, your Rangers will move through the culverts to this position,” Kerby tells one of his squad leaders, pointing to a map of the academy’s grounds. “Try to catch them with their pants down, but if you encounter any opposition, you know what to do.” He then tells his men that he will fire “a blue flare when we’ve taken the objective. Lay down a tank barrage for cover.”

Kerby and his men then sneak up on the students’ defensive positions through a culvert, and as Kerby and his men spill out for the attack, the script says that we see “cadets being hit by stun guns, their positions overcome rapidly and efficiently, the attack a complete surprise.”

But in the original script, before Kerby can fire his flare gun to bring reinforcements, “the cadets launch a pre-planned counter-attack, surrounding the startled Kerby and his men and trapping them out in the open, totally exposed and vulnerable.”

Brian Moreland, the cadet leader played by Timothy Hutton, then tells Kerby to surrender. “Colonel Kerby,” he says, “please have your men lay down their weapons. Do as I say and you will not be harmed.”

Undaunted, Kerby angrily yells back: “Moreland, I am going to fire this flare, at which time a coordinated attack will be launched on your defenses. You don’t have a chance, boy. Give it up!”

The script says that Moreland then “fires a single shot, wounding Kerby in the arm. He grabs at the wound, spinning away in pain, and dropping the flare pistol.”

“Colonel Kerby,” Moreland says. “I will make my request once more. Tell your men to lay down their weapons and surrender. You are completely surrounded. Do as I say or die where you stand.”

Kerby, seeing that he is in an indefensible position, orders his men to lay down their guns. But to his surprise, after his men have surrendered, Moreland hands him his ceremonial sword and offers his own surrender, ending days of confrontation. “We surrender,” Moreland tells Kerby.

In the original script, the cadets then begin handing over all their weapons, and as Kerby stares at them in disbelief, Moreland turns and walks toward the gates, followed by his fellow cadets. And as Kerby stares after them “with an expression almost envious—and feeling no sense of victory at all,” the script says that we then cut to the academy’s gates swinging open as “all the departing cadets join their parents.”

That was supposed to be the original ending of the movie, but it was totally unacceptable to the National Guard. There was no way they were going to help make a movie that showed National Guardsmen being captured by a bunch of kids.

So Jaffe and the writers came up with a new script that made the National Guard more sympathetic and heroic. There would be no tank barrage. And there would be no surrender by Kerby and his men. And Moreland would not walk out of the school triumphantly. He would be carried out—dead. And Moreland wouldn’t shoot Kerby in the arm. That would be done by Tom Cruise’s character, who is gunned down after he goes mad and opens fire with a machine gun on the National Guard and police SWAT teams who have surrounded the building.

So after Jaffe agreed to “tone down” the script, the National Guard agreed to cooperate and lent the production the tanks, jeeps, and weapons they’d requested.

Four days after the film opened on December 11, 1981, Joe Hanley, an official in the National Guard’s film office, wrote an internal memo

that recounted the Guard's battle with the producers, and its final victory in getting the script rewritten more to its liking.

“The first version of the script was probably the most negative piece on the Guard that I have ever reviewed,” Hanley wrote in an internal memo dated December 15, 1981. “Since the production was backed by a major studio, we knew it would be produced with or without our assistance. In order to tone it down, we agreed to work with the producer to gain some input into the script development. In the final version, the Guard fares very well. Colonel Kerby—the senior Guardsman—is played by actor Ronnie Cox as an intelligent, compassionate, human being who wants to avoid armed confrontation with the students at all costs. He is depicted as a no nonsense leader of troops—trim and with a fine military appearance. Without a doubt, he is the *only* one in the film without a character flaw and is the sole voice of reason in the conflict.

“Guardsmen are not depicted as bloodthirsty murderers—as was done in previous scripts—but are instead shown as competent professionals doing their jobs. No Guardsman is shown actually firing at a student. The final scene where the two cadets are killed was purposely left vague at our insistence so that it would not be determined definitively whether the lethal shots were fired by the Guard or police SWAT teams, both of whom are shown earlier. All in all, I feel the Guard is depicted as a professional military force who are performing a task they want to end without any bloodshed. The average moviegoer's impression of the Guard will be favorable.”

And in the end, that's all the National Guard ever wanted. Their mission had been accomplished.



# ★ CHAPTER 34 ★

## MOONING THE PENTAGON

The Pentagon panicked when it discovered that the Reverend Sun Myung Moon, the leader of the Unification Church, was the principal financial backer of *Inchon*, a movie starring Laurence Olivier as Gen. Douglas MacArthur that the Department of Defense was supporting. Back then, in 1981, the Unification Church wasn't as mainstream as it is today. It didn't own either the *Washington Times* or United Press International, the venerable wire service. It was just another cult—"the Moonies."

The Pentagon had provided the producers with numerous helicopters, tanks, field guns, jeeps, trucks, armored vehicles, and hundreds of off-duty American soldiers to help make the film. The Pentagon, which charged the producers \$102,000 for these services, liked the film, which Secretary of Defense Casper Weinberger described as "favorable" to the armed forces and "a relatively factual" telling of MacArthur's heroic battle at Inchon during the Korean War.

But the Pentagon hadn't learned that Moon would be credited as the film's executive producer until it was nearly completed, and then it was too late to do anything about it. Hoping to avoid the embarrassment of this association, the DOD asked the production company to leave Moon's name off the film credits, but the company refused. So it asked the company to eliminate the film's end credit thanking the DOD for its assistance, but the producers refused to do that, as well.



And now that the film had premiered at the Kennedy Center in Washington—with the U.S. Marine Drum and Bugle Corps playing patriotic tunes for the assembled dignitaries on hand to see the movie—questions about the propriety of this relationship were being raised. A congressman had written a letter to Weinberger wanting to know what the hell was going on. The congressman and his wife had gone to the gala premiere and he was stunned when he opened his program and saw that Reverend Moon was listed as the film's executive producer. He was even more shocked the next day when he read in the newspapers that the Pentagon had lent its "full cooperation" to the filmmakers.

"Unbeknownst to me when I accepted the invitation to attend the screening of the film is the fact that the principal financial backer of it is the Rev. Sun Myung Moon, the leader of the Unification Church," Congressman G. William Whitehurst wrote in his letter to Weinberger on May 6, 1981. "The Rev. Moon, as you probably are aware, is an extremely controversial 'religious' leader, who has been accused by numerous people of brainwashing his followers. Additionally, some of his financial ventures are, to say the least, highly questionable and may be in conflict with the best interests of our country. As one who has been active in combating various religious cults, particularly since the grisly events of Jonestown, I was disturbed that no mention was made of this before the showing at the Kennedy Center; and only then was I made aware of it when I opened my program and noticed the Rev. Moon's involvement.

"What disturbs me even more, however, is that our country allowed its military to be associated with this film and the Rev. Moon. According to an article in the Washington Post, which appeared the morning following the premiere: '... the movie's producers got some cooperation from the Defense Department, which let U.S. Army and Marine troops take part in the movie as extras. For that cooperation, the producers were reportedly billed \$77,000.' I am interested to know precisely what our association was in this movie. If nothing else, the Rev. Moon's cause has been further legitimized. I would appreciate it if you could shed some light on this matter."

This was bad. Congress had allowed the DOD to provide assistance to selected filmmakers—and to deny assistance to others—for decades, but an embarrassment like this could raise a lot of unpleasant questions about how—and upon whom—our military resources were being spent.

Weinberger called the DOD's film liaison office and had them send him a report on the film's background. Three weeks later, he sent Congressman Whitehurst a reply, saying that he too was concerned by Moon's involvement in the picture. He told the congressman that the film's production company, One Way Productions, had requested Pentagon assistance for the film back in 1978, and that approval was granted after it was determined that it met "existing DOD criteria and policy."

"Since there was no indication of any association with Rev. Moon or the Unification Church, the request was handled in the same manner as all other requests for assistance on the production of theatrical motion pictures," Weinberger wrote. "As DOD does not require a listing of backers or sources of financing for motion pictures, we had no reason to believe the film was other than a normal business venture. It was much later, and after the production was virtually completed, that we learned, through newspaper clippings, of Mr. Moon's financial interest."

"We requested that any possible implication of DOD endorsement of Mr. Moon or the Unification Church be avoided. However, without our concurrence or approval, a prominent title card crediting Sun Myung Moon was used in the premiere version of the film. We have since requested removal of any screen acknowledgment of DOD."

Weinberger went on to say: "While I think the record is clear that we did not knowingly give aid and comfort to Rev. Moon, I am distressed that an impression of DOD cooperation with Rev. Moon could possibly be made. It is impossible to investigate the detail of financing of commercial films. However, I have directed that DOD policy be reviewed with the intention of changing it to preclude this happening again."

The congressman, however, wasn't satisfied with that answer. "I don't want to be accused of beating a dead horse, but with reference to your letter to me . . . regarding the movie 'Inchon,' I believe there is an apparent contradiction I would appreciate having clarified," Whitehurst wrote in a follow-up letter to Weinberger. That contradiction, Whitehurst pointed out, arose because although the Pentagon only learned of Moon's involvement after the film was "virtually completed," and that "we did not knowingly give aid and comfort to Rev. Moon," the DOD had, in fact, authorized a Marine band to play at the premiere to help launch the film.

"What disturbs me," the congressman wrote, "is that while DOD obviously knew of Rev. Moon's involvement with the film near the end

of production, it still allowed the U.S. Marine Drum and Bugle Corps to participate in ceremonies at the film's premiere at the Kennedy Center. To me, this indicates that there was some degree of cooperation between DOD and Rev. Moon. And, as I mentioned in my previous letter, the situation was compounded by the presence of several members of Congress at the premiere."

Two weeks later, Weinberger responded. The request for the Marine band, he said, had been made by retired USMC Gen. S. Jaskilka, who was hired by the production company as a technical advisor on the film, and it had been approved by DOD's public affairs office. The film, he told the congressman, "portrayed U.S. forces favorably," and the proceeds from the premiere were to be donated to a home for widows and retirees of the navy and Marine Corps. Besides, he wrote, the presentation by the Marine band was "patriotic in nature and incidental to the program," and similar support had been approved for the premieres of several other movies, including *The Final Countdown*, *The Great Santini*, *The Big Red One*, *A Bridge Too Far*, and *MacArthur*.

"While the Rev. Moon's financial interest in the film was known at the time of the approval of this request [for the Marine band], I am told there was no apparent connection between the movie and the ideological movement of the Unification Church," Weinberger wrote, adding, ominously: "While I believe the decision was made in good faith here, I would certainly never have authorized any Departmental support for anything connected with Rev. Moon."

This last line in Weinberger's letter to the congressman is particularly disturbing because it suggests that there is an unwritten criteria for DOD assistance that goes beyond the DOD's official guidelines. It implies that even if a film project meets all the DOD's criteria for support—i.e., that it is historically accurate, aids recruiting, and is favorable to the military—it might still be denied DOD support because of the financial backer's unpopular or controversial religious beliefs.

It is a fundamental tenet of the Constitution that the government cannot play favorites with anyone because of their religion. The first words in the First Amendment state: "Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof. . . ." And the secretary of defense cannot do what Congress cannot do. He cannot provide congressionally funded government

resources to those whose religious beliefs he approves of, while denying that same assistance to those whose religious beliefs he disapproves of. The Constitution does not allow it.

And yet, that's what Secretary of Defense Weinberger said he would do if a request for DOD assistance ever came across his desk again that had Moon's name attached to it. And where would this lead? Would the DOD apply this same doctrine to other religious leaders? What if the Reverend Billy Graham wanted assistance for a movie he was making? Graham, after all, had produced two theatrical motion pictures—*Souls in Conflict* in 1955 and *The Restless Ones* ten years later—and he appeared in over a dozen other movies. Would he be acceptable to the secretary of defense? Or what about the Reverend Al Sharpton? He has appeared in four movies—*Malcolm X*, *The Last Party*, *Bamboozled*, and *Mr. Deeds*—and over a dozen television shows. Would his participation in a film or TV project preclude DOD assistance? And what about the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints? They produce a lot of church-related industrial and educational films. And what about the Church of Scientology? The film *Battleship Earth* was based on a book written by Scientology founder L. Ron Hubbard. Would that film's association with a controversial religious leader have caused problems for the Pentagon if its producers had asked for DOD assistance? Where would the line be drawn? And who would draw it? Clearly, it's a line that no one in government should be allowed to draw.

After his exchange of letters with Congressman Whitehurst, Weinberger asked Army Gen. Jerry Ralph Curry, deputy assistant secretary of defense for public affairs, to look into the feasibility of making producers "sign a statement concerning financing or embarrassing secret deals of partners" as a condition of receiving military assistance for their film projects. Curry ran the idea past Robert Gilliat, the DOD's assistant general counsel for public affairs, who then gave his opinion to Donald Baruch, the longtime head of the DOD's film office.

In a May 14, 1981, memo, Baruch wrote: "Mr. Gilliat states that we have the right to ask any reasonable questions and require any reasonable statements signed. However, he does not recommend it as the identity of the backer easily can be hidden and the question then asked why we wish the information. This could give rise to another question, 'Where is the line drawn on acceptability?' Such policy then might lead to another per-

taining to the acceptability of the creative talent such as writers, directors and players.”

So there would be no political or religious litmus test for producers and their financial backers—at least not officially. But clearly, as Weinberger’s letters indicate, if a secretary of defense or some other high-ranking Pentagon official doesn’t like a producer’s religion, he can easily put the kibosh on DOD assistance. All they would have to say is that DOD cooperation was denied because the film wasn’t pro-military enough, or because it wasn’t historically accurate. And there is no system of appeal. There are no checks and balances. The potential for abuse still exists today.

# ★ CHAPTER 35 ★

## LET THERE NOT BE LIGHT

In 1983, Cannon Films was getting ready to produce a movie called *Maria's Lovers*, which would star John Savage as a tormented World War II veteran whose marriage is nearly ruined because of his inability to forget the horrors of war. The producers wanted to introduce their movie with a one-minute clip from John Huston's film *Let There Be Light*, a stunning documentary shot at the end of World War II that chronicled the lives of several veterans who'd been hospitalized because of neuropsychiatric problems caused by their wartime experiences. Shaking, stuttering, and suffering from amnesia, the shell-shocked patients shown in Huston's film offered a heartbreaking glimpse into post-traumatic stress disorder, one of the little-known horrors of war.

The military, however, hated Huston's sympathetic but unheroic view of these injured servicemen. The documentary film, which had been shot for the government while Huston was still serving in the Army Signal Corps, had originally been targeted for release to the general public, but after seeing the film, the army changed its mind and banned it from public screening for thirty-five years. That ban was lifted in 1981 when the army—on the advice of its general counsel—released it into the public domain, meaning that it could now be used by anyone in any manner they saw fit without having to ask the army or anyone else for permission.

The producers of *Maria's Lovers* didn't know this, however, and thought they still needed the army's permission to use portions of Huston's

documentary in their film. Operating under this mistaken assumption, the producers went through the Pentagon's usual approval process, sending a copy of their script to the military in the hope that they would be given permission to use a portion of *Let There Be Light* in their film.

But instead of telling the producers the truth about the availability of *Let There Be Light*, the army resorted to a time-honored tradition of disinformation.

"Enclosed herewith is a copy of the most recent draft of the screenplay for the MGM/UA feature motion picture 'Maria's Lovers,'" wrote Rick Eaker, a researcher for Cannon Films, in a letter, dated July 19, 1983, that he mistakenly first sent to the navy. "As your inspection of page 1 of the screenplay will reveal, we are very interested in obtaining permission to use about one minute of specific footage from the John Huston documentary film 'Let There Be Light.' Inasmuch as this footage is absolutely integral to the opening of the film as it is presently conceived, the Navy's immediate response to our proposal is requested.

"I'm sure that you'll agree that the use of this footage is benign in intent and does nothing to slander either the Navy or the men viewed in the film. We are aiming at a realistic depiction of the horrors of prison camp life and the resiliency of the American fighting man."

The navy routed the request to the army, and three weeks later, on August 8, Col. Patrick D. Chisolm Jr., chief of the Policy & Plans Division of the army's Office of Public Affairs, wrote a memo to the office of the army's general counsel asking for legal advice on how best to respond to the film company's request. But as Colonel Chisolm already knew, the army had just recently released Huston's documentary into the public domain, and that it could be purchased from the General Service Administration's National Audio Visual Center in Springfield, Virginia. And as Colonel Chisolm also knew, the producers of *Maria's Lovers* didn't need the army's permission to use portions of Huston's documentary in their film.

"As your memorandum notes, this film is in the public domain as a result of the Army's release of it in early 1981," wrote Thomas C. Wright, assistant to the army's general counsel, in a memo to Colonel Chisolm dated August 12, 1983. "Consequently, the Army's permission is not required for any use of the film."

Chisolm's staff, however, was concerned that many of the mentally disabled men shown in Huston's forty-year-old documentary were still

alive, and that they and their families might be shocked to see their shattered visages being used in a Hollywood movie.

“Your staff voiced some concern to this office regarding the privacy of the individuals portrayed on the film,” Wright said in his letter to Chisolm. “Although the Army cannot require Cannon Films to be sensitive to protecting the dignity of the individuals involved, we would have no objection to your requesting that the company do so.”

A week later, on August 19, Colonel Chisolm wrote his response to the film company, trying his best to dissuade the filmmakers from using any portion of Huston’s documentary film. Playing on the producers’ mistaken belief that they needed the army’s permission before they could use a clip of the documentary in their movie, he not only failed to inform them that *Let There Be Light* was now in the public domain, but also told them that the army could not “endorse” its use in their movie.

“In reviewing the script for ‘Maria’s Lovers’ we found that your central character is a former Marine, not an [army] soldier, and the supporting character, Chadwick, is a Marine Corps colonel,” Chisolm told Eaker, Cannon Films’ researcher. “‘Let There Be Light’ is about Army personnel and shows them in Army uniforms. From that viewpoint it would not be accurate or appropriate to use film clips of ‘Let There Be Light’ in your motion picture about a former Marine. We are also concerned that the dignity and privacy of the individuals portrayed in ‘Let There Be Light’ be preserved. Based on the foregoing, the Army cannot endorse your use of the documentary ‘Let There Be Light’ to introduce a fictional story about a Marine.”

Despite Colonel Chisolm’s best efforts to conceal the truth from the producers, someone in their clearance department did their homework and discovered that *Let There Be Light* had passed into the public domain. And in the end, the producers used a small portion of the Huston documentary to set up their story.

“It’s no big deal,” says Marjorie David, one of the film’s screenwriters, of the army’s attempt to mislead the filmmakers. “It’s just disinformation.”

But if the producers hadn’t discovered their own mistake, and relied instead on the army’s disinformation tactic, *Maria’s Lovers* might not have opened with a scene from a documentary film that the army had banned for thirty-five years.





# ★ CHAPTER 36 ★

## “THE PROPAGANDA VALUE OF THE FILM”

**D**on Baruch, the longtime head of the Pentagon’s film office, was worried. He’d given the okay for the Defense Department to go all out in support of the new John Wayne movie *The Green Berets*, but now, after reviewing the final cut, he was having second thoughts. And it wasn’t that he doubted that it would be a good propaganda film for the ongoing war in Vietnam. He was worried that it was perhaps too obviously just that—a government-sponsored propaganda film.

So on February 19, 1968, he called Michael Wayne, the film’s producer and the son of legendary actor John Wayne, to talk about the DOD’s screen credit, a customary acknowledgment shown at the end of a movie that usually says something like: “Thanks to the Department of Defense and the Army for their generous assistance in helping make this film possible.” Baruch told Wayne that the DOD didn’t want the credit.

“Why not?” Wayne asked.

His answer was shocking—an admission that the DOD viewed films they assist as propaganda.

In his handwritten notes from that conversation, Baruch wrote: “Conferred with Michael Wayne regarding not using DOD credit because (1) ‘propaganda value of film’ might be affected by the association, (2) might increase letters of inquiry on how film received assistance.”

Baruch had been through a congressional inquiry into the Pentagon’s

dealings with Hollywood thirteen years earlier, on the film *Attack*, and he didn't want to go through that again.

So Michael Wayne talked to his famous dad and got back to Baruch three days later.

"We all agree with the DOD suggestion," Michael wrote, "that such a credit could conceivably categorise the picture as a U.S. propaganda film—rather than an exciting piece of motion picture entertainment. With that in mind, we will delete the DOD credit that appears on the end title card on page 3 of the tentative main title screen credits previously sent for your approval."

Never mind that the film actually was propaganda—a one-sided story designed to bolster the government's involvement in an unpopular war. The point was that the public should not perceive the movie as propaganda. And if eliminating the DOD's "thank-you" credit would help do that, then it would be eliminated. And it was. Indeed, *The Green Berets* is the only film ever to receive the full cooperation and approval of the military that does not have a screen credit thanking them for their assistance.

Removing the DOD screen credit, however, didn't stop the "letters of inquiry" from pouring into Baruch's office. Within a year, Congressman Benjamin Rosenthal would be writing letters to find out just how much the military's support of *The Green Berets* had actually cost taxpayers. Even more disconcerting for the Pentagon, the congressman would raise fundamental questions about the propriety of the DOD assisting films that towed the government's line on the war in Vietnam while refusing to help those films that didn't.

Rosenthal, a Democrat from New York who was an outspoken critic of the war, had a lot of questions.

"I have been concerned for some time with the influence which our military establishment has on our society," the congressman wrote on January 17, 1969, in a letter to the General Accounting Office (GAO). "I recognize that the needs of national security are predominant in the establishment and use of our military budget. But precisely because this gigantic budget is so difficult to oversee, I believe we in Congress have a special responsibility, whatever our committee assignments, to pursue this task.

"I was appalled recently to see, in the film 'The Green Berets,' a considerable expenditure of military equipment and manpower for the pro-

duction of a commercial motion picture. No matter what position one takes on the conflict in Vietnam, it seems clear to me that defense appropriations were used to assist that film’s producer.”

The congressman wanted to know how much assistance the DOD had provided to *The Green Berets*, and whether or not the film could have been made without DOD assistance. But he also wanted to know under what authority the DOD provides assistance to filmmakers; what other movies had been made about Vietnam with DOD assistance; and whether or not the true cost of that assistance is actually borne by the producers.

“Specifically, for the ‘Green Berets’ film, I would like a complete cost estimate of what American military participation involved and to what extent these costs were reimbursed by the film’s producers,” the congressman wrote. “Aside from the nominal ‘out-of-pocket’ expenses, like gasoline consumed, do costs reflect the true investment which the Department makes in these films? For example, do the cost estimates include, for an Army helicopter, the fact that such equipment has a limited useful life and that its use for one month during filming means that a significant portion of that useful life has been utilized?”

But aside from the costs, Rosenthal also wanted to know what part the government had played in creating and shaping the movie.

“Was the participation of the Defense Department so vital to the ‘Green Berets’ producer that the film could not have been made without such participation?” he wrote in his letter to the GAO. “Was the origin of the film an idea conceived by the Department of Defense to explain American participation in the war in Vietnam?”

*The Green Berets* had shot for 107 days, from August 9, 1967, to November 15, 1967, at Fort Benning, Georgia, and at several other military installations around the country. An investigation by the General Accounting Office found that Batjac Productions, John Wayne’s production company, “was not charged for the military pay costs of the troop support furnished by the 10th Aviation Group and the 197th Infantry Brigade. . . . In addition, Batjac was not charged for the loan of weapons, for the use of equipment and aircraft, and for military pay for troop personnel operating the equipment.”

The report found that “85 hours total flying time were logged for an undesignated number of UH-1 [Huey] helicopters and that weapons, such as M-16 rifles, mortars, grenade launchers and machine guns were pro-

vided to Batjac for a period of 107 days. Other equipment, such as bulldozers, cranes and trucks, was also provided.” The report also found that “3,800 man-days were involved in support of the film.”

For this, Batjac paid the DOD a total of \$18,623.64, or about \$4.90 per man-day, not including the cost of the helicopters and other equipment—a fraction of the military’s actual costs.

The GAO, while finding that the DOD’s guidelines for recouping the costs of services rendered to the film were “inconsistent” with other federal regulations, it determined that “rendering the type of assistance here involved is not in violation of law.”

Congressman Rosenthal, however, was outraged. He accused the DOD of subsidizing a John Wayne movie and costing taxpayers more than \$1 million to support a pro-Vietnam War propaganda film.

John Wayne was also outraged, accusing the congressman of being a “publicity-seeking idiot.” In an interview with the *Hollywood Reporter*, he said that in an earlier time, he would have dealt with the congressman man-to-man. “I wish this were the 1800s,” he said. “I’d horsewhip him.”

But while Wayne’s fight with the congressman over how much money the government spent supporting the picture grabbed headlines, the congressman’s question about the origins of the film went largely unnoticed by the press.

The GAO took the DOD at its word that Wayne had come up with the idea for the film, and left it at that. Indeed, Wayne had personally pitched the idea for the film to Pres. Lyndon Johnson in 1966. But what the GAO didn’t know was the extent to which the DOD had shaped the final product.

“DOD officials have informed us that ‘The Green Berets’ could not have been produced with any degree of realism without military assistance,” the GAO report said. “In connection with the origin of ‘The Green Berets’ film, our examination disclosed that Mr. John Wayne of Batjac Productions notified the Executive Office of the President in December 1966 of his desire to make a film based upon the book by Robin Moore and asked for cooperation in the production. He was advised that his correspondence was referred to the Department of Defense. The Department of Defense subsequently approved Mr. Wayne’s request.”

That finding, however, only told part of the story.

Wayne had indeed written to LBJ on December 28, 1966, seeking assistance in making his film.

“When I was a little boy, my father always told me that if you want to get anything done, see the top man—so I am addressing this letter to you,” the Duke told the president. “We are fighting a war in Vietnam. Though I personally support the administration’s policy there, I know it is not a popular war, and I think it is extremely important that not only the people of the United States, but those all over the world, should know why it is necessary for us to be there.

“The most effective way to accomplish this is through the motion picture medium. Some day soon a motion picture will be made about Vietnam. Let’s make sure it is the kind of picture that will help our cause throughout the world.”

Wayne, however, had actually approached the White House a year earlier, when he talked to Bill Moyers, then the special assistant to the president, and now a noted television journalist.

“A location jaunt held up my seeing and answering your encouraging note of January 18th,” Wayne told Moyers in a letter dated February 18, 1966. “In the meantime, my son Michael, who is producing this picture, has been in contact with Donald Baruch of the Defense Department. He has also engaged an extremely competent writer to start work on the screenplay. We feel confident that the finished script will be one that adheres closely to the thinking of President Johnson and the whole Administration regarding the role being played by the U.S. fighting men in Vietnam.”

Wayne intended to base his movie on the Robin Moore book *The Green Berets*. He’d purchased the rights and hired a screenwriter, James Lee Barrett, who cranked out a screenplay. Trouble is, the Pentagon hated the script, and they didn’t care much for Moore or his book, either, which described the torture of prisoners by real-life Green Berets in Vietnam. So detailed were his accounts of these war crimes that the Pentagon actually interrogated him about the information he revealed in the book.

On April 4, 1966, John Wayne, his son Michael, and screenwriter James Lee Barrett came to the Pentagon to talk about getting DOD assistance for their film project. They met with Arthur Sylvester, assistant secretary of defense.

Eight days earlier, Charles W. Hinkle, director of Security Review at the DOD, wrote a memo to Don Baruch, head of the Pentagon's film office, telling him that he'd read the script and that major changes would have to be made—especially the parts about the torture of prisoners.

"The script should be amended beginning at page 78 to delete the incident of brutality shown toward a prisoner by the Vietnamese officer, and the approval of it by the Americans, including Colonel Kirby [to be played by John Wayne]," Hinkle wrote. "This is grist for the opponents of U.S. policy in Vietnam. Such an act of brutality is in violation of the policy of the Department of Defense."

Hinkle also told Baruch "since your office is fully aware of [the] history of [the] 'Green Berets' book—we have not considered this history as a factor. We are commenting as if it was a brand new subject."

Two days later, Baruch sent a memo to Sylvester warning him to be careful of discussing Moore or his book at the upcoming meeting with the filmmakers.

"Any expressions concerning Robin Moore's book or Mr. Moore himself could be played by ear and considered as the situation might warrant," he wrote.

So even though it was, in fact, John Wayne's idea to make a movie about Vietnam based on Moore's book, the Pentagon had other ideas.

First of all, the script would have to be completely rewritten.

After reading the first draft of Barrett's screenplay, Baruch wrote: "The script came in and I quickly reviewed it, much to my disappointment. We failed somehow in getting over the mission of the Green Berets in Vietnam, as the basic story now involves an OSS [Office of Strategic Services] type into North Vietnam to blow up a bridge, a power plant and to snatch high ranking commie, but before this is carried out, our boys participate in a combat action to prevent a new camp from being taken by the VC [Viet Cong]."

Baruch then called Michael Wayne and told him that the script was no good.

Baruch, it turned out, was taking his marching orders from the State Department, which had numerous political objections to the screenplay. Francis W. Tully Jr., director of the State Department's speech review staff, bureau of public affairs, had read the script and didn't like it. In a

March 24, 1967, letter to the DOD, Tully told the Pentagon to ask the filmmakers to make numerous changes to the script.

First of all, Tully said, the screenwriter would have to delete any mention in the script of Green Beret incursions into neighboring Laos. In his letter to the DOD, Tully wrote: “There seems to be an implication that U.S. troops should cross the border into Laos for military operations, in the opinion of Col. Kirby [John Wayne], and hence the author of the script.” Tully goes on to recommend that the filmmakers “delete” the line on page 33 of the script that says “over Laos border,” and “delete” the word “Laos” from the last line on page 89 of the script. With regard to the references to an invasion of Laos, Tully wrote: “The language raises sensitive questions, but it is not important to the script.”

Tully and the State Department also had problems with the torture of a Viet Cong prisoner by a South Vietnamese officer.

“The brutality shown toward a prisoner by the Vietnamese officer, and the approval of it by the Americans, including Col. Kirby [John Wayne], who is in command, is grist for the opponents of US policy in Viet Nam,” Tully wrote. “It supports some of the accusations of these opponents against the US, and is of course a clear violation of the Articles of War.”

Tully also objected to a scene in the original script in which the newspaper reporter, played by actor David Janssen, comes to realize that he has been wrong about his opposition to the war, and in the middle of a battle with the Viet Cong, drops his notebook and takes up a gun.

“The incident in which the newsman, Beckworth, shifts his position to one supporting the US policies in Vietnam is a distasteful one,” Tully wrote. “When he reaches his decision that he has been wrong in the past, he seizes a gun and becomes a combatant. This violates the rules under which he operates as a news correspondent, and to the extent that the incident is considered realistic by those who might see a film based on this script, might indicate that it would not be unusual for a newsman to perform such violations. Also to be noted is the pleasure with which the soldiers accept and approve Beckworth’s asking for weapons.”

Tully also wrote “the script accentuates terms of contempt, such as ‘maggots,’ for Viet Cong personnel. Use of this terminology might be useful in propaganda against the US forces.”



The DOD passed all of these recommended changes on to the filmmakers, and all of the changes were incorporated in the film. There is no incursion into North Vietnam. There is no mention of Laos in the movie. The beating of a Viet Cong prisoner is done off camera and not in the presence of American soldiers. The newsman does not take up a gun and fight the VC. And the VC are not referred to as “maggots.”

After he returned from a Pentagon-approved trip to Vietnam, screenwriter Barrett wrote a letter to Baruch at the Pentagon. “When I returned, Mike Wayne told me about the talk he had with you after you read the first draft of the script. As far as I am concerned, there will in the final analysis be no problem,” he wrote. “I am sure that our second draft script will be done to the satisfaction of all concerned.”

And so it was.

And if the GAO had looked into the matter a little more closely, it would have discovered that while John Wayne certainly came up with the idea to base a movie on Robin Moore’s book, the final product had just as certainly been shaped, subsidized, sanitized, and heavily edited by the Pentagon and the State Department.

# ★ CHAPTER 37 ★

## BOWING TO POLITICAL PRESSURE

*T*he *Green Berets* wasn't the first John Wayne movie to bow to pressure from the military. In the summer of 1954, Wayne's production company, Batjac Films, wanted to produce a movie against the backdrop of Communist China. In the film *Blood Alley*, Wayne plays a merchant Marine captain who ferries a group of Chinese refugees to freedom aboard his broken-down riverboat.

The producers wanted to shoot part of the film on Angel Island in San Francisco Bay. Today, the island is a state park, but in those days—at the height of the Cold War—it was a heavily fortified military base, complete with a Nike missile installation. Wayne and the producers would have to get permission from the Department of Defense to shoot there, so they sent the script to the Pentagon for review and approval. They soon got word that there was a small problem.

The film didn't have any role for the military to play, but in return for the use of Angel Island, the DOD wanted a favor: There was a line of dialogue in the film that the Pentagon didn't like. It would have to be deleted.

That summer, the United States and the tiny island nation of Taiwan were drafting a mutual defense treaty that would guarantee the defense of *Free China* in the event of an attack by its giant Communist neighbor across the Straits of Formosa.

Wayne's movie, however, contained a line of dialogue that the Pentagon believed would be offensive to the Free Chinese Nationalists on

Taiwan and which could upset the diplomatic applecart. The line of dialogue referred to the Free Chinese as being “trigger-happy.” So on August 20, 1954, Don Baruch sent the producers a letter asking them to delete the line. Baruch also made it clear that if the line were not eliminated, the Pentagon would not extend the “courtesy” of allowing the producers to shoot their film on Angel Island.

In his letter to the producers, Baruch wrote: “It would be appreciated if you would either delete or change the line in Scene 85 [that reads] ‘. . . the trigger-happy Nationalists across the Strait.’”

The problematic line, Baruch told the producers, “might be misunderstood and possibly used in some manner unfavorable to this country.”

Wayne, ever the patriot, was pleased to oblige. The offending line was dutifully deleted and the production company got to shoot the movie on Angel Island. And on December 2, 1954, Taiwan signed its first-ever mutual defense treaty with the United States.

The U.S. military had been helping the movie industry since 1927, when it provided assistance to the silent-era movie *Wings*, whose stunning aerial dogfights helped win it the first Oscar for best picture. The collaboration between Hollywood and the military reached its zenith in the 1950s, when Hollywood was churning out hundreds of movies set against the backdrop of World War II, and to a lesser extent, the Korean War. It was the height of the Cold War, the height of McCarthyism, and the height of the Hollywood blacklist. Patriotism and anti-Communism were the orders of the day, and Hollywood took its orders from the Pentagon.

# ★ CHAPTER 38 ★

## ERASING PRIVATE PEDRO

Victor Millan's hands tremble as he looks at the documents lying on the table in front of him. Obtained from the U.S. military, the papers answer a question that has haunted him for fifty years.

Millan, eighty-three, is a retired movie actor. His career spanned three decades and brought him roles in seventeen films and dozens of television shows opposite some of Hollywood's top stars. But it was near the beginning of his career, in 1953, that Millan landed the role of a lifetime. As the character Pedro Rojas in the Warner Bros. film *Battle Cry*, he was cast as a Mexican-American medic in a squad of Marines that fights its way across the Pacific in World War II. In the screenplay by Leon Uris, Millan's character battles the Japanese at Guadalcanal, wins the Silver Star, and fights racism in his own ranks.

In Pedro's biggest scene, he confronts his nemesis—a bigoted Marine named Pvt. Speedy Gray—and then pours his heart out to his friends about the prejudice and poverty that Mexican-Americans are subjected to back in America. The scene was so powerful that after it was shot, Millan received a standing ovation from the cast and crew.

Millan and his wife excitedly awaited the release of *Battle Cry*, set for February 1955. But just before the film's premiere, Millan's agent called and gave him the worst news of his career: Millan's character, Pedro, had been all but erased from the movie. Millan still had one line of dialogue left, but he would not get a screen credit. And along with the character

Millan played, the issue of racism against Latinos also had been removed from the picture. Millan never knew why the studio left his breakout role on the cutting-room floor. The question had always haunted him, until now.

When he speaks, his voice breaks. “I am very moved,” he says, staring at the papers spread on the kitchen table in his home in Santa Monica. “This is the first time that I’ve seen documented evidence why I was cut out of that film. It opens up a wound that is still there. It festers.” Millan’s wife of sixty years, Louise, sits next to him. She is close to tears.

What the documents reveal is that Warner Bros. censored *Battle Cry* at the insistence of the U. S. Department of Defense. The brass at the Pentagon didn’t like the racism angle in the script, and they had the clout to make that part of the movie disappear. The film’s director, Raoul Walsh, wanted to film navy destroyers firing their big guns, planes taking off from aircraft carriers, and ships maneuvering at sea. All that could be arranged, the Pentagon said, but the prejudice portrayed in the script would have to be eliminated. So it was.

There aren’t many roles for Hispanic actors in films today, but back in those days there were even fewer—especially roles that explored the reality of racism in America. But Leon Uris had written a script that tackled the issue head-on.

“It was such a great part,” Millan recalls, looking at a photograph of one of his scenes that was cut out from the movie. “They had tested actors from all over the United States, so when I got the part, it was a very exciting time for me. I felt honored to have been selected to get a part that all Latinos would kill for.”

In real life, Millan served with the army air force as a sergeant in China, India, and Burma during World War II; studied acting at UCLA with the legendary James Dean in the early 1950s; and later chaired the drama department at Santa Monica City College, where he taught acting for more than thirty years. As an actor, he worked with some of Hollywood’s biggest stars: He worked with James Dean in *Giant*, playing Sal Mineo’s father; he was the man accused of murder by Orson Welles in *Touch of Evil*; he played a Colombian diplomat opposite Al Pacino in *Scarface*; and he played Elizabeth Taylor’s servant in *Elephant Walk*. But there was nothing in these future roles to compare with his part as Pedro Rojas in *Battle Cry*.

In his character notes for the screenplay, Uris, who adapted the script from his own best-selling novel, wrote that Pedro is “a heavily accented Texas-Mexican Navy corpsman [medic] who has joined the service in order to learn medicine. He must return to the Mexican ghetto of Texas with this knowledge to join the endless fight of bigotry-bred disease.”

In the screenplay, as in the novel, Pedro must also deal with the bigotry of one of the Marines in his own squad: Speedy, a Marine private from Texas played by Fess Parker (shortly before he was cast to star in the hit TV show *Davy Crockett*). In his character notes, Uris describes Speedy as a “20-year-old, crew-cut, guitar-playing Texan. In many ways, Speedy is the classic pose of the lazy and bigoted southerner.”

In the script, Speedy constantly refers to Pedro as a “Spic,” ridiculing and insulting him every chance he gets. We are introduced to Pedro early on in a scene during boot camp as he is handing out salt pills to the tired Marines. As he enters the barracks, one of the Marines says, “That’s the new corpsman. Nice guy for a sailor.”

“Yeah, Speedy, we got us another Texan,” says another Marine, referring to Pedro.

“He’s no Texan,” Speedy says, spitting out hatred. “He’s a grease-ball. There’s only one kind of Texan. You guys better learn the difference between a Spic and a real Texan.”

When the producers gave the script to officials at the Pentagon, they asked for a variety of changes. But they especially objected to the airing of racism in the movie. They thought the racial content reflected poorly on the military, reflected poorly on Texas, and “would be put to good use by communists.”

After reading the second draft of the script at the Pentagon, Don Baruch, head of the Defense Department’s film office, wrote a memo that detailed the military’s remaining criticisms. “Feel script has been greatly improved to remove certain objections,” he wrote. “Still has few points which should be taken care of, especially the part about racial hatred with Texan and Spic.”

And those “few points” would have to be taken care of if the filmmakers were going to gain access to the military hardware and settings they needed for the picture.

To their credit, the producers filmed the objectionable scenes between Pedro and Speedy over the Pentagon’s objections. But in the end, they

were edited out of the picture to mollify the military. The producers could tell their war story without Pedro, but they couldn't make their movie without the Marines, and stated with all truthfulness in the acknowledgments at the end of the movie, "Our grateful appreciation to the United States Marine Corps, without whose assistance this picture could not have been possible."

Victor Millan's big scene was filmed on the back lot at the Warner Bros. studios in the spring of 1954, a few weeks after he and the rest of the cast and crew had returned from Puerto Rico, where the film's battle scenes were shot. Millan had been practicing his part with his wife for weeks, and as he drove his '53 Ford to the studio that day, he went over his lines again and again in his head.

Millan was one of the first to arrive on the set, but before long the soundstage was swarming with activity. The other actors in the scene—James Whitmore, Aldo Ray, Tab Hunter, John Lupton, and Fess Parker—drank coffee and told jokes, waiting for Walsh to get the lighting and camera placement just right.

In the scene that follows, Pedro and his squad of Marines are in a bar in New Zealand celebrating his new Silver Star, awarded for valor during the battle of Guadalcanal. Pedro and Speedy have had run-ins before, but now, in the celebratory atmosphere, Pedro tries to befriend the bigoted Texan.

Millan can recall the scene as if it were shot yesterday.

"Speedy was prejudiced," says Millan. "Me being a Mexican and having won the Silver Star, he wanted to kind of put me in my place. He was drinking at one end of the bar, and I walk over to him to buy him a drink because we were celebrating my getting the Silver Star, and I want to make friends with him. I want to be one of the boys, one of the squad. And I go over to try and include him in it and I buy him a beer and put it on the bar."

But Speedy doesn't want to be friends. Puffing on a cigar, he looks at Pedro, and then taps the ash from his cigar into the drink Pedro has just brought him. A fight breaks out and several of their buddies break it up.

After the fight scene was filmed, the director repositioned the camera for a close-up on Millan, who is joined in the scene by actor John Lupton, who played Pvt. Marion Hotchkiss, a budding young novelist, and Tab Hunter, who played Pvt. Danny Forrester. This is Pedro's big scene, in

which he pours his heart out to his friends about his lifelong battle against discrimination.

The actors were ready, and when Walsh yelled, “Action!” the scene began.

“Congratulations on your Silver Star,” Marion says, patting Pedro on the back.

“Gracias, my story-writing friend,” Pedro says, nodding toward the bar. “Speedy doesn’t think so.”

“Has he been riding you again?” Danny asks Pedro. “What’s the matter with that guy, anyhow!”

“Speedy really isn’t a bad fellow,” Marion says. “But bigotry is a childhood disease.”

“And I’ve lived in an epidemic all my life,” Pedro says, shaking his head. “I’m sorry, my friends. I’m drunk. It is just that he never loses an opportunity to remind me I am a dirty Mexican. I am sorry I ever came to New Zealand.”

Marion says: “I don’t understand. I think it is a delightful country.”

Then Pedro says: “Yes, and that is why Pedro is sorry. Because for the first time in my life I have been treated as a man. I can walk into a restaurant, ride a streetcar, sit in a movie. No one stares at me here. The people, they call me Tex, like I am a real Texan. No one here knows what a ‘Spic’ is.”

Marion and Danny lower their eyes, and after a pause, Pedro continues: “I want you to know, my friends. Pedro does not fight for democracy because Pedro has no democracy. I come into the service to learn medicine so I can go back to my rotten shack town in Texas and keep the little ones from dying of filth. I am sorry I come to New Zealand because I know I must return to Texas.”

It’s a powerful scene—so powerful that after the director yelled “Cut!” the entire cast and crew burst into applause. Almost fifty years later, Millan still recalls the emotions he felt that day.

“Van Heflin and James Whitmore were on the set when we shot the scene,” Millan says, “and everybody applauded when we concluded. It was exhilarating. It could have been a defining moment in a career.”

But that excitement would turn to bitter disappointment when



Millan's agent called with terrible news. He had learned from an executive at Warner Bros. that Millan's part was virtually gone from the picture. The studio executive, however, said that Millan could still come to the premiere at the Pantages Theater in Hollywood if he wanted.

"I was so brokenhearted I didn't go," Millan recalls. "I was ashamed. People didn't know why I wasn't in the film and I didn't want to face them."

So he sent his wife, Louise. He drove her to the premiere and dropped her off.

"I didn't want to go," Louise says, "but he made me. I sat by myself. I was on the verge of tears throughout the movie. It was the saddest thing I've ever seen. He was cut out and I was very, very brokenhearted. Afterwards, he picked me up and I was too shocked to speak."

"She's been upset about this for many, many years," Millan explains.

In the final film, Pedro has only one line. When Marion congratulates him on winning the Silver Star, Pedro says, "Gracias, my story-writing friend." That's it. That's all that was left of his role. And after the bigotry was removed from the movie there wasn't much left for Fess Parker's character to say, either.

"I didn't have a heck of a lot to do," Parker says in an interview. "I was just sitting around with my guitar." Parker, who now owns a winery in Santa Barbara, doesn't even remember that his character was a racist, that he had a big fight scene with Millan, or that near the end of the original script his character visits the cemetery where Pedro, who has been killed in action, is buried.

In the second-to-last scene in the original script, as Speedy and several of Pedro's old buddies visit the grave, Speedy speaks his last line. Looking down at the resting place of the man he once ridiculed, he says, "I guess it's too late to tell Pedro I'm sorry."

But this touching and climactic moment was also cut from the film because once Speedy's racist dialogue had been eliminated, there was no longer any reason for him to apologize at Pedro's gravesite.

The Pentagon's own documents tell the story of why these roles were erased from the film. After reading the script, an unidentified military censor wrote a single word in the margin next to Pedro's lament about having to return to poverty and racism in Texas. The word, written in large letters and underlined twice, was: "Terrible."

Don Baruch, head of the Department of Defense film office at the time, had been working with the *Battle Cry* producers to tone down some of the drunkenness and scenes of “illicit love” depicted in the screenplay, but he was having trouble getting the studio to agree to eliminate the racial animosity that Speedy shows toward Pedro.

So Gen. Lemuel C. Shepherd Jr., the commandant of the Marine Corps, weighed in. At his direction, Brig. Gen. Joseph C. Burger, assistant division commander of the First Marine Division, wrote a letter to the Defense Department’s office of public information outlining the Marine Corps’ objections.

“This headquarters has examined this script and, subject to the comments below, has no objection to its production as a motion picture,” Burger wrote on April 19, 1954. “It is noted that certain objections made in previous letters on prior scripts have been incorporated in this latest script revision, whereas others have not. Although all sequences are not completely to the liking of the Marine Corps, it is realized that some compromise is necessary. One major objection which has not yet been incorporated is the comment by Pedro on page 93.”

Burger then wrote: “Suggest modification of the paragraph which starts, ‘This is why Pedro is sorry he came.’ This speech by Pedro would not only be objectionable to Texans but Americans as well. It would also be put to good use by Communists who are sure to use it out of context.”

Three days later, on April 22, Baruch wrote a letter to George Dorsey, Warner Bros.’ representative in Washington, telling him that Pedro’s big scene would have to go.

“The racial conflict and hatred indicated between Speedy and Pedro is not considered in the best interest of the government,” Baruch told Dorsey. “The speech by Pedro, Page 93, Scene 175, is especially objectionable as it easily could be used by the Communists for anti-American propaganda purposes.”

In the end, the Marine Corps got its way and the scene was edited out of the movie.

Uris, a former Marine who served in the Pacific during World War II, says that he never knew of the Pentagon’s concerns about Pedro until now.

“I didn’t know anything about any of this,” he said in an interview shortly before his death on June 21, 2003. “I was basically off the pic-

ture after I wrote the manuscript. Whatever papers those bureaucrats shuffled back and forth, I don't know anything about. They did not come to me on it."

Uris, who described himself as a "New York liberal," said he does not share the Pentagon's concerns that Pedro's scene might have been used as "anti-American propaganda."

"Obviously, it's not my political thinking," he said. "Never has been, never will be."

But Uris did go back to Washington before filming began to assure the Marine Corps that nothing would be put in the film that would be detrimental to the Corps.

"After I wrote the screenplay I was sent to Washington, and my job was to get cooperation from the Marine Corps," he said.

In Washington, he met with Capt. Ernie Frankel, an officer in the Marine Corps' film office, and assured him that his film would be pro-marine.

"Ernie and I hit it off beautifully," he recalled. "The Corps wanted to be protected, that's all. So, of course, I'm not going to write anything that is objectionable to the Corps. Period."

To protect its image, the Marine Corps assigned Col. Jim Crow to watch over the film's production.

"Colonel Crow was a big-time Marine hero, and he was the technical advisor on the film," Uris said. "Politically, if they wanted to change something, they would go to Crow, not to me. I had no power."

Despite what was done to his screenplay afterwards, Uris had written a powerful and passionate account of one man's struggle against bigotry. That story, however, never made it into the final cut of the movie.

"Leon Uris was ahead of his time," says Millan. "I've been in other films, like *Giant*, that dealt with prejudice, but as far as my roles were concerned, this was the most powerful writing. It had a poetic lilt to it. It inspires actors when you handle words like this."

Ironically, when Pedro's role was eliminated, the film was left with one other Latino character, Spanish Joe, a Marine Corps private who is depicted throughout the film as a liar, a thief, and a violent thug. So instead of being a step forward for Latinos, *Battle Cry* became another in a long line of derogatory setbacks.

The elimination of his role in the film “changed many things,” Millan says ruefully. “It would have been a great boost in my career as a young man. I really loved that scene because it really said a lot for the Latino cause.

“According to the military, there is no racial bias in the military. But this scene showed that there was. I am a loyal American, but I realize that the things that happened to Pedro did exist at the time, and I don’t think we should capitulate and cut things out that seemingly offend the military.”

CLOSE ON HUXLEY

His gay mood stops for an instant as he looks over room and sees Pat. Andy's back is to him. He stares long and hard at her, then suddenly returns to greeting his men.

BAR PEDRO

sits - tight and morbid. Danny and Marion approach him.

DANNY:

Mind if we join the bachelor's corner?

MARION:

(pats Pedro on back)

Congratulations on your Silver Star.

PEDRO:

Speedy doesn't think so.

DANNY:

Has he been riding you again? What's the matter with that guy, anyhow!

Pedro just gulps down his drink.

MARION:

Speedy really isn't a bad fellow...but bigotry is a childhood disease...

PEDRO:

And I've lived in an epidemic all my life.

(shakes his head)

I'm sorry, my friends, I'm drunk. It is just that he never loses an opportunity to remind me I am a dirty Mexican. I am sorry I ever came to New Zealand.

MARION:

I don't understand. I think it's a delightful country.

PEDRO:

Yes, and that is why Pedro is sorry. Because for the first time in my life I have been treated as a man...I can walk into a restaurant, ride a street car, sit in movies...no one stares at me here... The people, they call me Tex...Like I am a real Texan. No one here knows what a 'spic' is.

(Marion and Danny lower their eyes -- after a pause)

I want you to know, my friends...Pedro does not fight for democracy because Pedro has no democracy. I come into the service to learn medicine so I can go back to my rotten shack town in Texas and keep the little ones from dying of filth. I am sorry I come to New Zealand because I know I must return to Texas...

(CONTINUED)

Pedro's speech, from Leon Uris' original screenplay for *Battle Cry*, with the DOD's one-word comment—"Terrible"—written in the margin.

# ★ CHAPTER 39 ★

## “A SHAMEFUL ATTEMPT TO IMPOSE CENSORSHIP ON A FILM”

**R**obert Aldrich's conservative roots made him an unlikely hero in the first challenge ever mounted against the Pentagon's censorship of motion pictures. But Aldrich, the grandson of a prominent Republican senator and the first cousin of Nelson A. Rockefeller, was a born leader and a Hollywood heavyweight who believed that film directors shouldn't take orders from anyone—not from studio bosses, and certainly not from the Pentagon. “The game is power,” he once said of directing movies. “The power is for the director to do what he wants to do.”

So in 1955, when Aldrich bought the film rights to *The Fragile Fox*, a Broadway play about heroism and cowardice among American troops fighting at the Battle of the Bulge, it was inevitable that he and the Pentagon would clash.

In January of 1956, Walter Blake, Aldrich's associate producer, sent the Pentagon a copy of the script, which was later retitled *Attack*, in the hope that the army would give them the same kind of production assistance that they had provided to so many other World War II films, which were very popular at the time.

But the army hated the script, whose central character is a cowardly captain who's been placed in command of an infantry company by a colonel whose postwar political plans hinge on the captain's influential father. The captain, who would be played by Eddie Albert, has shown

cowardice in several early battle scenes, and his lieutenant, to be played by Jack Palance, vows to kill him if he ever lets his men down again. During the climactic battle scene, the captain shows his yellow streak once again, and several of his men are killed. A badly wounded Palance tracks Albert down, but he dies before he can exact his revenge. But when Albert tries to surrender his men to the Germans, he is shot and killed by another of his junior officers.

The army wasn't going to help a movie like that.

"This office has reviewed and evaluated subject screenplay, which is the story of an infantry company in World War II," wrote Lt. Col. H. D. Kight, chief of the army's public information division, in a letter dated January 13, 1956, to Don Baruch, head of the Pentagon's film office. "In general, it is a very distasteful story and derogatory of Army leadership during combat, including weak leadership, cowardice and finally, the murder of the company commander. In view of the above, the Department of the Army strongly disapproves subject script for any type of cooperation."

Two weeks later, Baruch wrote a letter to Blake at Aldrich's company, saying: "The screenplay does not qualify for cooperation under the criteria of our policy. The story basically is considered to be derogatory to Army leadership during combat and features weakness, cowardice and murder."

When Aldrich read the letter, he was furious. In a reply dripping with sarcasm, he wrote Baruch: "There are many emotional and practical reactions one might take to a letter as disturbing as yours, particularly in the phrase that outlines why it is your considered opinion that our film is derogatory to Army leadership during combat.

"I do not wish to quarrel with experts on morale, recruiting, propaganda, etc., but I do claim a rather authoritative opinion when it comes to dramatically showing a point of view. Theatrically and film-wise, moral values are measured by comparatives; strength is measured against weakness; heroics against cowardice.

"It would be easy for this to be an angry letter of denunciation and a hurt cry of favoritism and persecution. I hope you will understand that these quite obvious alternatives are not being chosen deliberately. We feel strongly that our film is one that shows beyond question qualities of moral righteousness, leadership, courage, heroism and above all, personal

integrity on the part of both enlisted men and officers of the Army. To make characters white it is necessary to have a reflective comparison against characters that are not white. Such is the case in our film.”

In his closing remarks to Baruch, Aldrich wrote: “I have every confidence that when you and the other authorities concerned see what we have done in making ‘Fragile Fox’ a fine film, you will have no hesitation or misgivings about giving our picture your approval and blessing.”

But Aldrich couldn’t have been more wrong. Not only wouldn’t the Pentagon provide any assistance for the film, but the army wouldn’t even let soldiers stationed in Europe see it at theaters on military bases. According to an Army Department document, written by the same Col. H. D. Kight who originally turned down army assistance for the film, “AAFMPS [Army and Air Force Motion Picture Service] advises motion picture ‘Attack’ may not—repeat not—be approved for showing on Army-Air Force circuit in USAREUR [United States Army Europe].”

So Aldrich decided to take a step that no one had taken before, and which very few have taken since. He would go public with his complaint that the military was trying to influence the content of his film.

“I don’t want them to dictate how to make my picture,” he told *Daily Variety*, the venerable Hollywood trade paper, in an interview that was published February 24, 1956. He also complained about the army refusing to show his movie in military theaters in Europe. “After all,” he told *Daily Variety*, “everybody wants that extra \$100,000 from post theaters and overseas showings to servicemen.”

But box-office money was not his main concern. As Aldrich said in a letter to Baruch: “It appears that there is a question of moral values here, that at least to me, is by far the most important question at issue.”

Aldrich went on to make *Attack* without the military’s assistance, but his public criticism of the Pentagon created a firestorm of controversy that for the first time prompted Congress to look into the military’s heavy-handed role in moviemaking.

Congressman Melvin Price, a Democrat from Illinois who sat on the House Armed Services Committee, had seen the film and was outraged by the army’s refusal to provide assistance to it. On August 30, 1956, he called the army’s decision “a shameful attempt to impose censorship on a film because it dares to present an officer whose character is marred by human failings of weakness and cowardice.”



Price, who called the movie an “exceptionally fine film,” said that the army was wrong to withhold assistance because the film depicted an officer as a coward.

“I hope the American people will not let those responsible for the injustice get away with their attempt to depict all phases of military life through brass-colored glasses,” he said.

But the Pentagon was in for some even worse news. Less than three weeks after Congressman Price publicly criticized the Pentagon for refusing to help Aldrich, the U.S. Senate’s Judiciary Subcommittee on Constitutional Rights started looking into the affair.

On September 18, 1956, Charles Slayman, the subcommittee’s chief counsel and staff director, wrote a letter to Robert Tripp Ross, assistant secretary of defense, asking for a formal explanation.

“A question has been raised before the Senate Judiciary Subcommittee on Constitutional Rights as to whether the Office of Public Information of the Department of Defense has been unfair in denying ‘cooperation’ to the producer of the commercial movie, ‘Attack,’” Slayman wrote in his letter to Ross. “While the Senate Subcommittee cannot take sides concerning any particular movie, or proposed movie, it is interested in fair treatment for all and in proper use of government property.

“It would be appreciated, therefore, if you would report to the Senate Subcommittee in writing on the particular grounds for denying Defense Department ‘cooperation’ to the producer of ‘Attack.’”

A few weeks later, Assistant Secretary of Defense Ross sent his reply to the subcommittee. His letter contained an outline of the DOD’s basic rules for cooperating with filmmakers, an explanation of why *Attack* did not qualify under those rules—and a whopping lie.

The Department of Defense, he wrote, “cannot appear or seem to condone, under any circumstances, cowardice, murder, insubordination or misconduct on the part of military personnel. It is obvious that with millions of men serving in uniform, not all of them can be brave and courageous. It is recognized that there are instances where quite the reverse is true. It is likewise evident that it is not either desirable, or possible, to give official cooperation to productions that would tend to discredit personnel and in so doing tend to undermine or tear down morale among servicemen.”

And then came the big lie.

“At the same time,” he wrote at the very end of his letter, “the Department of Defense recognizes that there is no intent or desire on the part of our government to affect or influence the independence and complete right and prerogative of writers and producers to propose and record military services, with whatever content, and directed to show the shortcomings and sordid side of character, as well as the heroics and the courageous.”

In fact, the Pentagon’s own memos and correspondence with producers reveal that over the last fifty years there has indeed been a very concerted effort by the Department of Defense to “affect or influence” filmmakers. The evidence for that is irrefutable, and the Senate subcommittee could have easily verified it by simply looking at the Pentagon’s own documents.

But the Senate subcommittee took Ross at his word. The investigation would go no further, and the Pentagon would go on doing exactly what Ross said it had never done and would never do.

Thirteen years later, in 1969, there would be another investigation of the Pentagon’s dealings with Hollywood—this time by the Government Accounting Office over the movie *The Green Berets*. But once again, the Defense Department would obfuscate, and the investigators would take the DOD at its word without asking to look at the voluminous documentation that would have proved that the Pentagon was lying.

If there was a full congressional investigation today, they would find stacks of documents that reveal that the Pentagon does “affect or influence” filmmakers—and that not much has changed in the last fifty years.



# ★ CHAPTER 40 ★

## LASSIE WANTS YOU TO JOIN THE ARMY

In the early days of television, Lassie saved Timmy and his family from all sorts of dangers: fires and floods, careless hunters, switch-blade-toting thugs, runaway tractors, rampaging circus elephants, rabid dogs, and marauding bears. But even Lassie couldn't save Timmy from being ground up by the Pentagon's propaganda machine.

In 1961, the producers of *Lassie* were getting ready to film an episode of the popular kids' TV show in which the heroic collie saves lives by solving the mystery of a crashed military aircraft. The producers wanted the military's assistance, so they submitted their writer's script to the Pentagon's film office and signed a form stipulating that the finished product "will be in keeping with the highest standards of propriety and dignity" and "will not be detrimental nor derogatory to military operations."

On January 27, 1961, they heard back from Maj. William T. Ellington at the Pentagon film office. "We have reviewed the script and interpose no objections except that we strongly recommend that you change the circumstances of the airplane crash," Ellington wrote.

The original script stated that the airplane—an army L-19 reconnaissance plane known as "The Bird Dog"—had a correctible design flaw that caused it to crash. The military, however, would have none of that.

A synopsis of the episode, called "Timmy vs. the Martians," laid out the story line.

"Timmy and two other boys have put together a contraption con-

sisting of an old radio, old telephone, etc.," the synopsis reads. "The object of this machine is to guide a Martian ship to earth. It is located in an old deserted shack. The night has come for the testing of the gadget. Timmy pulls the switch and the boys feel they have put together a dud, when all of a sudden, Lassie starts barking, leading the boys outside. All of a sudden, they see a plane crash. When the Army investigators begin to look around, they find Timmy's flashlight and return it to him. Timmy, of course, thinks they have come to arrest him, but they are only interested in asking him if he was in the area and if he had seen the crash. When Timmy explains that Lassie set up a howl and led them out just in time to see the plane crash, the Major in charge of the investigation decides to have a professor experiment in his laboratory to find out the cause of the plane crash.

"Duplicating the condition of flight under which the plane was flying by blasting wind through a tunnel, Timmy and Lassie are asked to sit close by. Suddenly, as the wind gets to a high pressure, Lassie sets up a howl, which shows there is a vibration in the wing structure. The high frequency vibration could not be detected by human ears but only by the dog's. Lassie solves the mystery and no lives will be endangered because of it."

In his letter to the producers, Major Ellington wrote: "We are quite sure that the Army stock footage sequences you plan to use are concerned with the L-19 aircraft manufactured by the Cessna Corporation. In your script, as an explanation of the crash, you say: 'It points up a structural defect in the plane wing's assembly.' This . . . could elicit serious objections from the Cessna Corporation. . . . The statement could be interpreted to mean that the Army purchases aircraft without making sure that all structural design defects have been eliminated. The L-19 is a most reliable aircraft and does not deserve any deprecations of its design."

Instead of a structural defect, Major Ellington recommended that the producers change the script so that the cause of the crash would be attributed to "unpredictable" icing on the plane's wings.

"We suggest that the L-19 be depicted as having encountered unpredictable icing conditions which weighted the wings beyond the 'lift' capabilities and, at the same time, changed the 'air-foil' of the wing," Major Ellington wrote to the producers. "The latter condition could be interpreted as causing the mysterious sound oscillations which could only be heard by Lassie."

The major added: "If you find that you are able to make the suggested changes, we feel that we will be able to offer you full cooperation. . . ."

The producers not only made the changes, but they adopted Major Ellington's proposed dialogue, virtually word for word, including the key word "unpredictable." This is significant because it removes any blame from anyone for designing—or not discovering—the flaw that had caused the crash in the original script.

In the army's revised script, after Lassie howls during the wind tunnel test on the model plane, the professor tells Timmy: "You see, Lassie gave us the only clue there was."

"What did she hear, professor?" Timmy asks.

"She was able to hear sound oscillations which could not be heard by human ears," the professor replies. "The plane encountered unpredictable icing conditions which weighted the wings beyond 'lift' capabilities."

The army major in charge of the investigation adds: "And at the same time, changed the 'air-foil' of the wing, setting up high frequency vibrations. Thanks to Lassie, we have solved the mystery of the crash."

The new dialogue written by the military did two things. It not only provided a new explanation for the crash—unpredictable icing (no one to blame), but it also changed the whole point of the original story, which was *not* that Lassie had solved a mystery, but rather, that in solving the mystery, she had saved lives—her whole reason for being.

The last line of the synopsis for the original script says that "Lassie solves the mystery and no lives will be endangered because of it." But that last part was taken out by the military. In the script approved by the army, Lassie is still a good detective, but she is no longer a hero because no lives have been saved by her actions.

Is this a proper role for the military—to make Lassie look less heroic so that the military will look better instead? Don't they have anything better to do with taxpayers' money?

"Timmy vs. the Martians" was the first episode of *Lassie* that was produced with the military's assistance, but it wouldn't be the last. A few months later, the producers filmed an episode called "The Patriot," a story about Lassie helping to train a cowardly German shepherd so that it could become a brave army guard dog at a nearby Nike missile base. And the Pentagon was eager to place similar military story lines in other episodes.

“We enjoyed our association with you on past productions such as ‘Timmy vs. the Martians’ and ‘The Patriot’ and trust you will consider ‘Lassie’ in other situations involving the Army, Navy, Air Force and Marine Corps,” wrote Don Baruch, head of the Pentagon’s film office, in a letter to the producers. “We will be happy to discuss any other ideas.”

One of those ideas was for an episode called “Bird of Prey,” in which Timmy and Lassie take a lost falcon to the Air Force Academy so that it can become one of the military school’s mascots. (Along the way, Lassie rescues Timmy after he falls off a cliff.) Timmy’s cousin, Dick, is a cadet at the school, but the air force didn’t think there was enough for Dick to do in the episode. So they asked the producers to give him a bigger role—and to feature the Air Force Academy more prominently.

“We were delighted to learn that ‘Lassie’ will favor the Air Force Academy in the future episode, ‘Bird of Prey,’” Baruch wrote in a letter to the show’s producers. “The script has been reviewed by the Air Force and this office and is approved for Department of Defense cooperation. However, there are two minor suggestions that have been forwarded through the Air Force.”

Those suggestions called for Dick to mention that he was a falcon trainer. “If cadets help train them at the Academy, he could say so!” the Air Force said in a memo to Baruch. The air force also wanted Dick to send for his falcon-training manual back at the academy so that he could give it to Timmy.

“The Academy office of information has approved the story outline in principle and the script is a result of that coordination,” wrote Maj. Gene Alberts, head of the air force film office in Los Angeles, to his boss at the Pentagon. “It is the opinion of this office that support of the project is distinctly in the best interest of the Air Force and the American public as it provides to a primetime Sunday evening audience certain facets of cadet life, the Academy and the panoply of splendor surrounding the institution.”

But the millions of young boys and girls who watched the show never knew that their favorite collie was really a secret recruiting agent for the Pentagon.

# ★ CHAPTER 41 ★

## BABES IN ARMS

*The Mickey Mouse Club* was one of the most popular kids' shows of the 1950s. It featured a bright young cast, wholesome values, sing-along songs, Disney cartoons—and a healthy dose of military propaganda.

The show regularly aired newsreel segments called “Mouse Reels” that featured military story lines that were approved and prescreened by the Pentagon before they were aired.

“We have worked with all of the Armed Services at one time or another since we began operations,” said the show’s newsreel editor, William C. Park, a former navy reserve commander, in a letter seeking military assistance from the Department of Defense in 1957. “We have enjoyed wide acceptance by an estimated 15 million youngsters.”

And the Pentagon, whose guidelines provide that the military will extend cooperation only to films and TV shows that “enhance the U.S. Armed Forces’ recruiting and retention programs,” was only too happy to lend a hand to *The Mickey Mouse Club* and to get the military’s message out to those 15 million youngsters.

A “Mouse Reel” shot in 1956 on board the USS *Nautilus*, the world’s first nuclear submarine, was typical of the kind of propaganda that the Pentagon and the show’s producers were dishing up for those potential recruits.

In a letter to Park, a Pentagon official wrote: “The Department of



Navy considers this production an excellent opportunity for the younger generation to become acquainted with the *Nautilus*.”

The script for the eight-minute film about the nuclear sub reads like a commercial for the nuclear navy, which, in effect, it was.

The segment begins with a shot of the *Nautilus*’s official insignia, which was created by Walt Disney, who also created the choo-choo train logo for the Marine Corps’ Toys for Tots program. The film then follows two young children—Rodney, the young son of the ship’s captain, and Cheryl Ann, the little daughter of one of the ship’s crew—taking a tour of the nuclear-powered submarine.

In the original script, the narrator tells the young viewing audience that “the *Nautilus* is different from anything that ever moved before. It’s actually powered by a controlled atomic bomb!”

Pentagon documents show that the navy had a major problem with that, and insisted that the script be changed to say that the sub is run by a nuclear reactor—not a controlled atomic bomb.

Later in the script, the narrator tells the viewers that the nuclear sub is a very safe ship. Each sailor onboard the *Nautilus* “wears a radiation badge to check on radioactivity aboard,” the narrator says, assuring the young audience that “tests show that a man soaks up more radiation in the garden on a hot day.”

The navy also insisted that a line in the script be deleted that speculated about the limits of the sub’s diving capabilities. “The *Nautilus* can dive deeper than any other submarine,” the narrator says in the original script. “Some say 1,000 feet, but the exact figure is secret.” The navy made the producers take out the part about the sub being able to dive to 1,000 feet. (Top-secret documents subsequently declassified by the navy reveal that the sub’s maximum diving depth was 700 feet.)

The original script had one other minor problem. As the film shows the sub’s crew preparing to dive, the script says that as water fills the ballasts, “the mighty warship starts to sink!” Wrong word, the navy said, insisting that the word “sink” be replaced with “dives under the water.”

Otherwise, the script was fine. It showed America’s kids how great the *Nautilus* is, and how much fun it is to be a sailor in the navy. And the food’s good, too.

“The huge galley is spotless—and the food, like most Navy chow, is tops,” the narrator tells the young viewers.

And there are even games to play, and a jukebox, too.

“While eating, crew members may listen to music over the ship’s jukebox,” the narrator says. “And the most popular record aboard is the “Mickey Mouse Club March,” which goes nicely with dessert. In the ward room, officers spend their off duty hours reading—or relaxing over a game of Acey-Duecy. And there’s little engine noise to disturb the contestants.”

And the ship has nice beds for the sailors to sleep in.

“Each crewman has a comfortable bunk, with a foam rubber mattress!” the excited narrator tells the young viewers.

In other words, the nuclear sub has everything a Mouseketeer could ever ask for: good food, games to play, a jukebox that plays the “Mickey Mouse Club March,” and warm comfortable beds.

The show had everything that the navy could ask for, too—millions of young boys watching and waiting for the day that they could join the navy.

Before the *Nautilus* segment aired on *The Mickey Mouse Club* on January 7, 1956, William Park told the Pentagon: “It is a particular pleasure to me, as a one-time reserve Commander, to have the opportunity of handling a film story certain to reflect great credit upon our Navy.”

Everybody was happy—just like in the navy.

The army and the air force also got into the act. Sometimes they didn’t wait for the producers of *The Mickey Mouse Club* to come to them with ideas. Pentagon documents show that the various branches of the armed forces regularly pitched ideas to the show’s producers in the hope of being featured on the popular show.

One such idea was pitched to Park by the 5004th Air Intelligence Service Squadron—a top-secret intelligence-gathering unit based in Alaska.

“The 5004th exists primarily to locate and investigate the crash of any hostile aircraft, the object being the recovery of technical information concerning enemy equipment, operations, etc.,” the squadron’s information officer, Maj. Francis H. Dawson, wrote to the show’s producers.

“In addition, they are able to interrogate prisoners in a total of eight languages. To help keep an eye on the doings of our Soviet neighbors, we have enlisted the aid of Eskimos the length and breadth of Alaska’s vast interior. The 5004th’s people really get around! All volunteers, they are trained in the arts that help assure survival along the trail—they travel by

snow shoe, skis and dog sled. Teams live for weeks at a time with the Eskimos in their villages, acquainting the Eskimos with the mission and getting their assurances of support when—and if—the big flap gets underway.”

None of that, of course, would be in the newsreel. The “big flap”—military slang for World War III—would be too scary. And what do kids care about the interrogation of enemy prisoners? Instead, the segment would focus on the training of the dogsled teams. Kids and dogs, how could it miss?

The producers loved the idea and knew how to turn a complicated and controversial subject into something simple and rosy that would appeal to children.

“Every once in a while the Air Force comes up with a high voltage idea from a live-wire officer,” Park said in a letter to the Pentagon. “He has a gutsy story to tell—one that will appeal strongly to the younger generation.”

And in a clear example of censorship and self-censorship working hand in hand, Park also noted that *The Mickey Mouse Club* could be trusted not to divulge the 5004th’s secret mission, and would focus solely on the dogsled training. “The activities of the 5004th Air Intelligence Squadron operating in Alaska are described to me as background for the specific story of training that the Major proposes,” Park told the Pentagon. “Mind you, the Major does not propose that we cover or reveal the vital mission of the 5004th.”

No, the idea for the newsreel would be to show “a photogenic youngster” training with the dogsled team. “They will harness the dogs, drive the sleds and in general put on a whale of a show,” the major told the producers.

Correspondence between the producers and the Pentagon shows that each side was well aware of what the other wanted.

“I think we could really develop a series to bless the Air Force immensely,” Park said in a letter to the Pentagon in 1957.

And bless the air force he did. And the navy. And the army. And the Marines. *The Mickey Mouse Club* managed to work footage of all the branches of the service into its programs.

In 1956, Park wrote to the Pentagon, “we had some of our children aboard the *Nautilus*; also, we flew a couple of youngsters aboard a [navy]

blimp out of Lakehurst. With the Air Force, we had a cameraman visit many installations throughout Europe and North Africa last year.”

The next year, a show featured a newsreel segment shot in Pearl Harbor to commemorate Armed Forces Day. It showed children taking part in the raising of the colors above the sunken battleship USS *Arizona*; reviewing army troops at a fort on Oahu, and visiting an air force installation on the island.

The collaboration between the Pentagon and *The Mickey Mouse Club* may have been good both for ratings and for recruiting, but it raises many serious questions. Should the Pentagon be allowed to target young children as future recruits? Does Hollywood have a responsibility to keep military propaganda out of children’s programming? Don’t parents have a right to know that the shows their children are watching contain military recruiting messages? And most importantly, don’t children have the right to watch cartoon shows without being subjected to military propaganda?

*The Mickey Mouse Club* was not the only 1950s-era television show that the Pentagon used to introduce children to the armed forces.

In 1958, two other shows were on the air that the Pentagon supported in the hope that they would one day attract young men to the service academies. The weekly shows, *West Point* and *Men of Annapolis*, were both produced by Ziv Television Programs, one of the top producers of TV shows in the early days of television. The original writers on *West Point* were two of Broadway’s leading playwrights, Robert E. Lee and Jerome Lawrence, whose stage credits included *Auntie Mame* and *Inherit the Wind*.

Two years earlier, the producers of *West Point* had entered into an agreement with the Department of Defense that allowed them to film the show at West Point, while receiving full cooperation from the DOD and the academy.

The producers had to submit each script to the DOD for approval, and Pentagon documents show that the DOD required numerous script changes on virtually every show, and sometimes on every page of a script. On one show, for instance, Don Baruch, the Pentagon’s chief liaison to the film industry, told the producers: “We also believe that the word ‘death’ should be eliminated from your host’s opening statements.”

The producers' written agreement with the DOD for the production of the show made it very clear what the military wanted out of the series. The agreement states that the producers will have the DOD's support "so long as the series remains beneficial to the service and the academy." And without that support, there would be no show.

And the record is clear that the producers knew full well what the Pentagon wanted most—young viewers who would one day become potential recruits.

Once the two shows were on the air, Ziv vice president Robert Friedheim wrote Baruch saying, "I was particularly happy that you share our optimism about the beneficial results of these continuing efforts for the academies and the Department of Defense."

In another letter, Friedheim told Baruch: "We know from our past experience in re-run presentations of our properties that both 'West Point' and 'Annapolis' will continue to reach important new audiences for the next few years. In addition to opening up markets in which the programs may not have previously been presented, the re-runs are scheduled at different times, which attract substantial groups of new viewers. For example, in New York City, where the program was presented last season on ABC in a late evening spot on Tuesday night, the 'West Point' series is now scheduled at 7 o'clock on Monday night, which makes it much more available to youngsters and teenagers, for whom it has a tremendous appeal."

Friedheim also told Baruch that *West Point* and *The Men of Annapolis* would be sponsoring essay contests to further solidify the shows' young viewing audience. "We are recommending to our stations," he said, "that they stage, in cooperation with local schools, parent-teacher groups and Army and Navy organizations, a form of essay contest for young men between the ages of 10 and 18."

At the same time these two shows about the military academies were targeting young viewers, the Pentagon was also collaborating with the producers of the TV show *Steve Canyon*, a show based on the popular comic strip about the adventures of the square-jawed air force pilot.

The show's producer, Stanley Meyer, already had one hit show on the air. He'd made a fortune from *Dragnet*, which starred Jack Webb as Sgt. Joe Friday, a no-nonsense, just-the-facts LAPD cop. And now he wanted another.

And Meyer knew how the game was played. He'd already played it

to the hilt on *Dragnet*, which he produced with the assistance of the Los Angeles Police Department, which even in those days—like today—had the reputation of playing fast-and-loose with standard police procedures. But Joe Friday changed that image. Joe Friday was a good cop. He never bent the rules. He never beat up suspects. He never took a bribe. And the LAPD loved him.

So in his pitch letter to the Pentagon, Meyer promised that *Steve Canyon* would provide the same kind of public relations benefit for the air force that *Dragnet* had provided for the LAPD.

"It is my intent to produce a television series based on 'Steve Canyon,' the King Features cartoon character, appearing in newspapers throughout the U.S. and Canada," Meyer said in an April 4, 1955, letter to Baruch at the Pentagon.

"Inasmuch as all the activities of Steve Canyon are portrayed with a U.S. Air Force background, any proper depiction of the Air Force would require their cooperation. At this writing, the planning of the series is dependent upon a number of factors, not the least of which being the approval of full cooperation by the Air Force. . . . I can assure you that it will be given the same careful production accorded to 'Dragnet,' for which I was the executive producer."

Mindful of the Pentagon's requirement that assistance only be given to those productions that help the military's recruiting efforts, Meyer wrote: "In addition to entertaining the public, I am confident that this series will offer an opportunity to the Air Force for portrayal of many of its vital activities as well as providing educational and public relations values. There would seem little doubt that the series could be of vast value to Air Force recruiting."

The DOD was eager to assist. In a letter to Meyer, Brig. Gen. B. E. Allen, director of the air force's information services, said: "The possibility of Steve Canyon becoming a television character holds considerable appeal to us. Certainly, if he can do us as much good as Joe Friday has done for the Los Angeles Police Department, we would be most grateful."

And like the LAPD, the air force was grateful. *Steve Canyon*, produced with the DOD's assistance from 1958 to 1960, reached millions of future recruits, many of whom went to school every day carrying their sandwiches and milk in their Steve Canyon lunch boxes and thermos bottles.

The targeting of youngsters isn't a thing of the past, however. Today's producers also pitch the Pentagon on the merits of assisting films and TV shows aimed at young audiences.

In 1995, Dean Devlin was desperate to get the Pentagon's assistance for a film he was getting ready to shoot called *Independence Day*. He needed jet fighters, tanks, and Apache helicopters for his special-effects extravaganza about an alien invasion of Earth. But he was having trouble convincing the Pentagon that his movie would be good for the military. The DOD didn't like the script; it wasn't pro-military enough.

So on May 8, 1995, Devlin fired off a letter to Phil Strub, who succeeded Baruch as the Pentagon's chief liaison to the film industry, assuring him that he would make all the necessary changes suggested by Strub, and promising that the film would enhance the military's recruiting program.

"We're going to make 'Star Wars' and 'Top Gun' look like paper airplanes," Devlin told Strub. "Just wait. There has never been any aerial footage like this before. If this doesn't make every boy in the country want to fly a fighter jet, I'll eat this script."

# ★ CHAPTER 42 ★

## BABES IN GAS CHAMBERS

**T**he Marine Corps has its own way of reaching children as possible future recruits. It's called the Devil Pups.

In 1984, Walt Disney Studios was developing a screenplay for a movie about the adventures of a group of boys who go through the Devil Pups' summer boot camp, a program of Marine Corps exercise, discipline, and indoctrination.

The Marine Corps was excited about the prospect of such a film, but Duncan Shaw Jr., president of Devil Pups, Inc., was dubious. Shaw, a retired Marine captain who had fought in the Korean War, told the Marines that he did not want any additional publicity about his organization; that he was concerned that the film would make the Devil Pups look like an official activity of the U.S. Marine Corps; i.e., a recruiting program that targets children, and that the film might start a "flood of inquiries." And then there was the "gas chamber" that they put the kids in at Camp Pendleton as part of the Devil Pups program. Probably better if that did not come out in the movie.

Devil Pups was founded in 1953 by Shaw's father, retired Marine Corps Col. Duncan Shaw Sr., after he saw a news report about a group of teenagers who'd burned an American flag at a Southern California high school. Outraged by this unpatriotic activity, Shaw Sr. and a group of retired Marine Corps Reserve officers contacted the commandant of the



Marine Corps and asked him if he would support an organization that would instill Marine Corps values and discipline into boys too young to join the Corps. The commandant thought it was a great idea, just as long as it would not be seen as an official recruiting arm of the Marines, and just as long as the money to run the program was raised privately as contributions from individuals, civic groups, corporations, and foundations.

So in 1953, Shaw Sr., who had fought in both WWI and WWII, set up the Devil Pups as a nonprofit charitable organization, and the next year, the first group of 1,800 boys—aged 14 through 17—began arriving at Camp Pendleton to begin their Devil Pups training under the tutelage of real-life, on-duty Marines, euphemistically called “escorts.”

It was a good deal for both organizations. The Marines would allow the Devil Pups to use its facilities at Camp Pendleton free of charge each summer to put the youngsters through Marine Corps-type training, and over the years, the Devil Pups would expose tens of thousands of boys to the Marine Corps’ way of doing things.

But thirty years later, when Disney wanted to make a movie about the Devil Pups, Duncan Shaw Jr., the founder’s son and successor, began to worry that maybe publicity—even good publicity—might not be such a good idea. And he had reason to be concerned. For despite their denials, the Devil Pups was in fact an alter ego of the Marine Corps: It had been founded by a retired Marine, it was run by retired Marines, and it took its marching orders from the Marines.

The Marine Corps, however, didn’t share Shaw’s concerns. The producers would need the Marine Corps’ assistance, and in return for that cooperation, the Marines had insisted that the producers agree that there would be nothing in the film that even hinted that the Marines were using Devil Pups, Inc. to target children as future recruits.

After being told by the Marines what the deal was, producers William Blinn and Michael A. Hoey put their agreement with the Corps in writing. In a letter to the Marines, they wrote: “It is our intention to develop a screenplay that will explore in a positive and up-beat nature the affirmative results of the Devil Pups program. As we see it at this juncture, the story will focus on several young boys as they go through the program—one of whom may be a bit of a problem and will eventually get ‘back on track’ because of his exposure to Devil Pups—and one of the young Marines to serve as platoon escorts. . . . It is our belief that the finished

film will be family entertainment which will enhance the images of the U.S. Marine Corps and the Devil Pups.

"We are aware that the Devil Pups program is not a military-sponsored activity and that the U.S. Marine Corps permits limited facilities and escorts as part of their 'Community Action' Program. These facts will be clearly brought out in the film so that there will be no misrepresentation or misunderstandings. Also, the film will make it amply clear that the Devil Pups program is in no way a recruitment program for the Corps."

After receiving the producers' assurances, Col. J. L. McManaway, the director of the Marine Corps' public affairs office in Washington, DC, wrote a letter to the producers. "I have reviewed your proposal and find that the concept is one that could be beneficial to both Devil Pups, Inc., and the Marine Corps," he told the producers. "I appreciate your frankness in addressing what would be our primary concerns: That the Devil Pups program not be construed as an official Marine Corps program or as a recruitment program."

Shaw Jr., however, was still not convinced it was such a good idea. But he got convinced after the Marine Corps set him straight.

The same day that Colonel McManaway wrote to the producers thanking them for understanding the Marine Corps' primary concerns, he fired off a stern letter to Shaw Jr., letting him know in no uncertain terms that the Marine Corps wanted this film made, and that it wanted the Devil Pups to cooperate.

"While I understand that you neither seek, nor desire additional publicity for the Devil Pups program, I do feel that such a film is worthy of our cooperation," he told Shaw Jr. on March 14, 1984. "In an era when many films about the military tend to be 'anti' rather than 'pro,' a film aimed at the family market which emphasizes the positive aspects of military discipline and values seems to deserve our support.

"The assurances that Mr. Blinn and Mr. Hoey have given, that they will not misrepresent the Devil Pups program as an official U.S. Marine Corps activity, adequately address our primary concern. As to our reaction to a potential flood of inquiries to Headquarters Marine Corps about Devil Pups, I believe we could easily deal with such a popular response. There are several avenues to which interested persons could be channeled, such as Marine Corps Junior ROTC.

"The benefits of the Devil Pups program have long been recognized

by the Marine Corps. In my opinion, sharing the ideals of your program with the movie-going public would be good for the Devil Pups, the Marine Corps and our country. I hope you agree and trust that I have made clear our feelings on the proposed film.”

Shaw quickly got in step with the Marines and agreed to cooperate with the filmmakers. But a year later, as the film project moved tortuously along the development path, another problem arose. Devil Pups, Inc. had made its own videotape about its summer boot camp at Camp Pendleton and sent it to the Marine Corps’ PR office in Washington, where it was not favorably received. The problem was serious: it was about “the gas chamber,” where over the previous thirty years, thousands of children—many as young as fourteen years old—had been placed in a room at Camp Pendleton and then exposed to CS tear gas by their on-duty Marine “escorts.” A trustee of the Devil Pups defended the practice back in 1985, saying that a “reduced dosage of CS is utilized—a dosage merely sufficient to give the young men an appreciation for its effectiveness.”

The Marine Corps, however, didn’t like the idea of its camp being used to gas children. So on March 26, 1985, Colonel McManaway’s successor, Brig. Gen. D. E. P. Miller, straightened Shaw Jr. out.

“I have viewed the tape with much interest and, I must say, with some concern,” the general told Shaw. “There is no doubt that the youngsters are highly motivated and that they reap many benefits from the program. Your efforts to instill patriotism, discipline and self-confidence are commendable.

“Of concern to us is the inherent danger in some of the activities, and the possibility for very adverse press for the Marine Corps should one of the youths be seriously injured or killed in training. Scaling a 60-foot obstacle without a safety line and being subjected to CS [tear] gas are but two examples of areas where things could go very wrong.

“I would ask that you reexamine some of these more dangerous training elements to see if they could be made safer or be eliminated. Unfortunately, the nature of public opinion being what it is, one serious incident could impact in a very negative manner on both the Devil Pups organization and the U.S. Marine Corps.”

Shaw Jr. quickly snapped to attention again, assuring the general that these training exercises would be reviewed immediately.

“Regarding the repelling tower and tear gas chamber,” he told the

general, "I am meeting with our camp commander for the purpose of discussing the possible elimination and/or revision of these two activities."

He noted, however, that "through the years, these two activities have proved to be extremely popular with our participants. You may have noted these comments from one young man after exiting the gas chamber; 'that was awful stuff—I will never get into a school riot.'"

Shortly thereafter, the gas chamber was eliminated.

The movie project about the Devil Pups died a slower death, lapsing into "development hell," and never making it into production. Producer Hoey, who still has hopes of one day producing the film, has each year faithfully renewed his option with Devil Pups, Inc. In 1996, he thought he was close to getting the green light from Disney, and had even locked in actor Tom Selleck—himself a former Devil Pup—to play the leading role in the film—that of a Marine sergeant who puts the kids through their paces. That attempt to bring the Devil Pups to the screen also stalled, however. But the decades-long development of the project shows the lengths to which the Marines will go to get out a positive message to the moviegoing public—just as long as that message doesn't mention the gassing of children by Marines at Camp Pendleton.

Today, Shaw Jr. still insists that the Marines don't use Devil Pups, Inc. as a tool to recruit youngsters, although he offers some tantalizing evidence that puts that claim in doubt.

"The commandant of the Marines, Gen. James L. Jones, asked me last year how many Devil Pups have gone into the military and how many have gone on to become Marines," Shaw Jr. said in a telephone interview from his home in Virginia Beach, Virginia.

In a letter to General Jones, Shaw replied: "I estimate that 37% of our [43,000] graduates—or 15,910—served in the armed forces. Of that group, 75%—or 11,932—were Marines."

The commandant, Shaw recalls, "was surprised" by those figures. "He didn't realize that there were that many. So I asked him, 'What does it cost you to recruit one Marine?' He said \$30,000. That's what's in their budget. So I said, 'Well, we got you a bunch for nothing.' He was pleased."



# ★ CHAPTER 43 ★

## THE CY ROTH STORY

Cy Roth is widely regarded as one of the worst filmmakers of all time. He made only three films, and all of them stunk. No doubt the worst was *Fire Maidens from Outer Space*, a silly science-fiction story that he wrote, produced, and directed in 1956, and which is often cited as one of the ten worst movies ever made.

But Roth had chutzpah. He was one of the bravest—and perhaps craziest—men in Hollywood in the 1950s. At the height of the Hollywood Blacklist, when lives and careers were being ruined just on the suspicion of disloyalty, he took on the Pentagon like no one else in Hollywood ever had before or since. When the Pentagon turned down his request for assistance for a World War II movie he wanted to produce, he accused them of censorship, discrimination, and anti-Semitism. He complained to the NAACP and to B'nai B'rith. He called his congressman, and he wrote to President Eisenhower. And when the Pentagon got sick of his complaints, they sicced the FBI on him to see if he was a Communist. He wasn't. He was just outraged.

In 1953, Roth set out to produce *Air Strike*, a serious movie about discrimination on board an aircraft carrier during World War II. One of the characters in his original script, named Leavitt, was a young Jewish officer, and another, named Jones, was a young black officer—and both were subjected to discrimination on the ship. Roth had secured financial backing for the film and now all he needed was some assistance from the

navy. He needed some stock film footage from World War II, and he wanted to shoot his film on board an aircraft carrier.

But the Department of Defense had no interest in helping a film about discrimination in the navy. Unless he changed the script significantly, they said, they wouldn't help him. And not only would they not let him shoot on a carrier, they wouldn't even sell him stock footage.

"We do not care to extend cooperation on the present script as basically the story is built around religious and racial prejudices and discrimination," wrote Don Baruch, head of the DOD's film office, in a letter to Roth dated January 28, 1954. "Your story would have the public believe that religious and racial prejudices are prevalent in the Navy." Baruch added: "Providing you desire to go ahead with a Navy story and because the stated objections are so basic, we suggest a new approach to the story be tried."

Roth went nuts after reading Baruch's letter, and wrote back an angry reply accusing the DOD of discrimination. But the navy had him over a barrel and he knew he would have to rewrite the script if he was going to get their help. He would tone down the script, but he wouldn't tone down his attack on the Pentagon.

"Exploring the matter regarding religious and racial prejudices existing or not existing in the [Navy], we would like to go on record as stating that such does exist," Roth told Baruch. "We feel deeply that you and your department have shown discrimination against us. . . . As we understand it, the only objection is racial and religious story points. If we correct our script to meet with the enclosed comment instructions, plus eliminating the above mentioned story points, will this give us full approval and cooperation?"

Baruch told him that that was all he had to do, so Roth reluctantly set about rewriting the script to eliminate the racial and religious story line.

"We have proceeded in the direction indicated by your office," he told Baruch a few days later, "and have made a complete revision of the script, eliminating all the objectionable scenes and sequences, while at the same time incorporating all the comment changes recommended by the Navy Department."

Baruch, however, thought that Roth was trying to pull a fast one. He thought that Roth was going to try to sneak a story of discrimination into the script anyway.

“Although many of the original objections have been overcome, the basic story conflict still leaves many questions in our minds,” Baruch told Roth in a letter. “The names of Leavitt and Jones have been changed to Loring and Alexander. The original script actually never referred to Jones as being a Negro, although it appeared to all who read the script that he must be intended to be one. Again in the revisions, the feeling is that he is meant to be played as a Negro and that Loring probably will be indicated as being Jewish.”

Roth, however, assured Baruch that he wasn’t playing any games.

“As you know and have read, all the changes in the script were made with the sole and express purpose of eliminating all references to Negro and/or Jewish aspects,” Roth told Baruch. “Your second paragraph seems to be intent on the fact that we are intending to play Loring as a Negro and Alexander as a Jew, or vice versa. That is not the case. May we point out to you that you will have final approval on the finished picture, and if you can see one clue to a Negro being cast in the picture, or one clue of a Jew being cast in the picture, including all possible racial and physical aspects, then we have to say to you, don’t give your approval. To put it bluntly, this picture will be wholly Protestant.”

But Baruch still didn’t like the script and told Roth that he would have a better chance of getting DOD cooperation if he made the story about jet pilots aboard a modern-day aircraft carrier instead of an old World War II carrier. And now that Roth had eliminated the racial and ethnic conflict aboard the ship—as the DOD had requested—Baruch told him that the story was too weak to warrant DOD assistance.

“Sometimes it becomes extremely difficult to discuss a script only in the realm of the military and avoid entering into categories which producers consider their prerogative,” he wrote Roth on March 22. “However, when we do step across the story line, it is only because we wish to assist in making the picture a stronger and better film for the service concerned. With that preface, we trust you will accept the following in the proper spirit.

“In eliminating the former apparent racial and color prejudices as a basis for motivation, misunderstanding and dramatic forces, the remaining ‘conflict’ appears quite weak. Consequently, the overall story becomes weak and seems to lack overall purpose.”

Now Roth was really steamed. The navy didn’t like his original script



because it was about discrimination against a black man and a Jew. But when he took that out, they said they didn't like it because it had no conflict. So a few days after receiving Baruch's latest letter, he called his lawyer in New York and told him to call on Baruch to see what was going on.

The lawyer, Phillip Dodson, visited Baruch in his office on March 29, 1954. According to Baruch's notes, Dodson "wanted to know why we were for segregation, when regulations were against." Baruch wrote that he pointed out to Dodson that "we were not for segregation, that all the Navy wanted to do was clear up points, strengthen script."

Two days after the meeting, Roth fired off an angry letter to President Eisenhower, who had recently spoken out against segregation.

"Just a few days ago," Roth reminded the president, "you addressed a meeting in Washington and at the same time your words were carried to our nation concerning the problem of segregation and racial equality . . . and you recently ordered segregation stopped in all military schools. Yet this distressing problem is still apparent and does exist in the Office of Public Information of both the Department of Defense and the Department of the Navy.

"For the past six months, our company has been trying to get approval and cooperation from the Department of Defense for a theatrical motion picture titled 'Air Strike.' We are asking for relief from this intolerable situation of discrimination and prejudice now existing in both of the above-mentioned departments and offices.

"We have complied with every one of the orders, comments and criticisms of the Office of Public Information, Department of Defense, but because our screenplay originally—since revised per request—called for a *JEW* and a *NEGRO* to portray character roles as ensign pilots in the Navy air arm, we have been given passive resistance, been shunted aside and have been treated in a completely opposite manner as enjoyed by major studios."

In his letter to Eisenhower, Roth then quoted from Baruch's "hypocritical" letter in which Baruch told him of the need to eliminate all references "to color line and prejudice in the religious vein."

"Do we have totalitarian dictators in our government in such offices that they can prevent the carrying out of justice and fair play, and also prevent the full use of citizenship rights that are to be enjoyed by all, bar none, according to the Constitution of the United States?" Roth asked the president. "Your immediate attention and full investigation is urgently requested."

Two weeks later, G. Herschel Schooley, director of the DOD's office of public information, responded to Roth's letter to Eisenhower.

"Your letter of March 31, 1954, to the President has been referred to this office," Schooley wrote. "In reply, we are giving you the pertinent facts regarding your proposed production 'Air Strike.' Military cooperation on commercial motion pictures can only be authorized when:

"1. Cooperation would prove beneficial to the morale of the members of the individual service concerned.

"2. Cooperation would benefit the public by better informing them of the military service.

"3. Cooperation would benefit recruiting for the Armed Forces.

"The original script of 'Air Strike' as presented by you did none of these things. Instead, it capitalizes on religious and racial discrimination within the naval service—in addition to showing discrimination against Negroes and Jews, the original script also showed discrimination against the Catholics. The revisions to your script, when these story points were deleted, still did not qualify the story under any of the three cooperation requirements."

There would be no investigation of the DOD, as Roth had requested in his letter to President Eisenhower. Instead, Roth would be investigated.

On the same day that the DOD sent its reply to Roth's letter to Eisenhower, an FBI investigation was launched into Roth's background.

On April 12, 1954, Maj. Johanna Mueller, head of the air force's film office, wrote a memo to George Gould, director of the DOD's security division, saying: "It is requested that an FBI check be accomplished on Mr. Cy Roth, producer, Coyt Productions, 1225 South Hudson Avenue, Los Angeles, California. An ONI [Office of Naval Intelligence] check has been made by the Department of the Navy; however, they are not certain if he has operated under this name for any length of time."

The FBI didn't find anything subversive in Roth's past, but shortly after the FBI investigation was launched, Roth changed his tune and agreed to cooperate.

"We are ready and willing to cooperate 100% with you and your department and the Department of Defense," Roth wrote on May 12, 1954, in a letter to the Navy Department.

Two weeks later, Baruch wrote Roth a letter saying that the DOD would assist his film project, and would allow him to shoot on board the

USS *Essex*, a navy aircraft carrier. Production was completed in January 1955. The script had been changed, at the DOD's request, from a story about pilots aboard a World War II aircraft carrier to one about pilots aboard a modern-day jet aircraft carrier. And as Roth noted in a letter to Baruch, "The original script had a Negro and a Jew as fighter pilots, the final script and the picture has neither."

The navy, however, didn't like the final product. After reviewing the film, they wrote a letter to Roth saying that his film contained numerous "technical errors" and insisting that he delete any screen credit thanking the navy for their assistance.

Stung by the navy's criticism of his movie, Roth wrote to Baruch on January 22, 1955, saying: "I knew or believed you felt this picture of mine was the best propaganda the Navy has had in years."

*Air Strike*, which starred Richard Denning, Don Haggerty, and former child star Gloria Jean, has been largely forgotten, and with good reason. It's a terrible film with minimum production values—something akin to a home movie set on an aircraft carrier. A year after its release, Roth would write, produce, and direct *Fire Maidens from Outer Space*, and shortly thereafter, would slip into obscurity.

His losing battle against the Pentagon, however, may be his lasting legacy.

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WAInut 2895

February 1, 1954

Mr. Donald E. Baruch  
Department of Defense  
Office of Public Information  
Washington 25, D. C.

Dear Mr. Baruch:

This will acknowledge receipt of your letter and inclosure of January 28, 1954.

What you have stated in your letter seems to be an opinion ventured either by you or by Department of Defense officials, while we have been given to understand that the Navy Department has approved the script in toto with the exception of actual technical terms and language and description. However, if we are wrong in our understanding, please correct this immediately. We have two divergent opinions.

We also understand that the script was held up in the Department of Defense for over a month and was only recently given to the Navy Department for screening. We would like a clarification of the operation moderandi on this, too.

Exploring the matter re: religious and racial prejudices existing or not existing in the particular branch, we would like to go on record as stating that such does exist. You may not be aware of this fact, but we can use a prime case as the Rickover situation. However, all of this is actually beside the main, and only, point as far as we are concerned.

We want to make a good picture. We are loyal Americans and as such we would not like to portray anything that would put any branch of our government in the public eye in a bad light.

This is also to inform you and your department, that we are still holding the Number 1 priority for this type of picture. However, if you feel you are not willing to cooperate with us in this matter, we shall endeavor to produce the picture without your help as all of the necessary material is at our hand, and if such should occur, we shall make the picture as the script now reads.

Our immediate plan is to go ahead with the changes as to technical terms and languages that have been submitted in this, your last, letter. And, too, we have already begun story point

Roth's angry reply, February 1, 1954.

Roth's angry reply, February 1, 1954 (continued).

-2-

changes to eliminate the racial and religious aspects completely. But, we are still maintaining the actual framework of the script as it now stands. For example: instead of there being characters as Leavitt and Jones, now these two characters become similar to Delaney and Perini. As stated just above, the religious and racial aspects will be eliminated in an effort to win the Department of Defense approval.

However, we feel deeply that you and your department have shown discrimination against us. We would like to have you correct this impression. We have been given to understand that approval by a department automatically gives approval by the Department of Defense. Maybe this is so, and ~~maybe~~ not. Correct this understanding, too.

Also we would like to pinpoint your objections. As we understand it, the only objection is racial and religious story points. If we correct our script to meet with the inclosed "comment" instructions, plus eliminating the above mentioned story points, will this give us full approval and cooperation?

We have asked a number of questions and also clarifications in this letter. We shall appreciate having your reply by earliest mail as we have to put ourselves on solid ground and know exactly where we are going. Your immediate reply could help a great deal.

Sincerely yours,

*Cy Roth*  
Cy Roth

CR/s

PS: Re: "comments" that the four ensigns are new. Is it possible that these four ensigns could have been in the navy during the last war and have been called back into the navy for a two year hitch? And if that could be, then the four ensigns would have taken a check-up flight training before coming aboard the carrier? And the ensigns so designated could be married?

701  
ENCLOSURE  
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## ★ CHAPTER 44 ★

### **“COOPERATION BY THE UNITED STATES NAVY SHOULD EVINCE A CERTAIN RECIPROCITY IN MAKING CHANGES IN THE SCRIPT”**

The producers wanted screenwriter Bernie Gordon to come down to Long Beach harbor to take a tour of the World War II-era submarine they were going to be using in the movie he'd written. It was 1956 and the movie was *Hellcats of the Navy*—the only film that Ronald and Nancy Reagan ever appeared in together.

Gordon, who was finishing off the final draft of the script at his home in Los Angeles, was in a jam. He couldn't go down there, but he couldn't tell the producers why. So he made up a story. “I don't go on submarines,” he told one of the producers. “I get claustrophobic.”

Gordon actually had a much better reason for not wanting to tour the sub. Gordon, who was writing the script under the pseudonym Raymond Marcus, was a Communist and a blacklisted screenwriter, and he was under constant surveillance by the FBI. He was afraid that if he went anywhere near a navy submarine, the FBI might accuse him of espionage.

“Who knows what they could come up with?” Gordon, now eighty-five, recalls with a wry laugh. “I stayed clear of anything that could be considered spying.”

The navy was only too happy to let the producers at Columbia Pictures use one of its subs for a week or two, but they would want something in return.

“It has been indicated that the services of a submarine . . . will be required for approximately one week,” wrote Cdr. Frank Richardson,

head of the navy's pictorial branch, in a letter dated September 24, 1956, to J. Raymond Bell, vice president of Columbia Pictures. "It is considered that such cooperation by the United States Navy should evince a certain reciprocity in making changes in the script to depict the officers and men of the Navy as normal but dedicated citizens."

Commander Richardson didn't care much for Hollywood or for the many war movies the studios were turning out in the 1950s.

"We view with distaste and disapproval an apparent trend in motion pictures featuring stories of naval officers which present them as people who have more than their share of emotional conflicts and 'inner-self' crises," Richardson wrote in his letter to Bell.

But in his reply, Bell assured the commander that Columbia Pictures was a patriotic company and urged him not to lump Columbia's movies in with all the other studios' pictures.

"You cannot put all Columbia pictures in the distaste you may have for the type of pictures other companies have made," Bell answered Richardson in a letter dated October 8, 1956. "If you examine the service pictures made by this company, I am sure you will concur that we have always been concerned with the need of affirmative value for all of our films. We like to look upon our company as an organization that has a healthy appreciation for the basic institutions of this country."

The navy was particularly offended by a story line in the script that depicted insubordination between the sub's executive officer and its captain, who would be played by Ronald Reagan. But Bell assured the navy that that element in Gordon's script would be toned down.

"We have every intention of soft-peddling rank insubordination," Bell wrote in his letter to the navy.

(Ironically, nearly forty years later, President Reagan would appoint Bell chairman of the Foreign Claims Settlement Commission of the United States, an independent, quasi-judicial federal agency organized administratively as a component of the U.S. Department of Justice, whose mission is to determine the validity and valuation of claims of U.S. nationals for loss of property in foreign countries.)

Today, Gordon laughs when he looks at the fifty-year-old navy documents concerning his film.

"The navy doesn't want conflict inside a submarine," he says, "but

what kind of a movie can you make without conflict? To have drama, you have to have conflict.”

Gordon never received any notes from the navy about the changes they wanted. All those notes went directly to the producer, who then told Gordon what they wanted changed without ever telling him that the changes had been suggested by the navy.

“The producers didn’t say it was because of navy censorship,” he recalls. “They just said, ‘We want this, we want that.’ You have to understand that in Hollywood, writers are the least important people. They’re never told anything.”

Gordon’s script was loosely based on the book *Hellcats of the Sea*, the true account of a daring submarine attack on the Japanese fleet in the heavily mined Sea of Japan in the last days of the war. But the book lacked the interpersonal conflict that fuels dramatic tension. Yes, it was a well-told, fact-based story about an important naval battle, but it wasn’t very sexy, and even in the 1950s, Hollywood liked sex. So the producers had Gordon add a little to the script. And that’s where a young actress named Nancy Davis, making her last screen appearance, came into the picture.

Ronald Reagan has always insisted that there was no blacklist in Hollywood, but in fact, if there hadn’t been a blacklist, he might not have ever met Nancy, and without her, he might not have ever become president of the United States.

In 1949, seven years before she appeared opposite Reagan in *Hellcats of the Navy*, Nancy Davis was a struggling young actress with only one screen credit to her name. That fall, she’d landed a small role in her second movie, *East Side, West Side*, and all was going well until one morning she picked up the *Hollywood Reporter*, the town’s red-baiting trade paper, and saw her name printed in a long list of suspected Communist sympathizers.

Nancy was frantic, and when she went to the set that day, she pleaded with her director, Mervyn LeRoy, to help her.

Don’t worry, LeRoy told her, he had a friend at the Screen Actors Guild who could clear this whole thing up. His friend was Ronald Reagan, the guild’s president, who also happened to be an informant for



the FBI (as was revealed many years later in secret Justice Department documents obtained by the *San Jose Mercury News*).

LeRoy called Reagan, and as Reagan later wrote in his autobiography, *Where's the Rest of Me?* the director "told me an actress working on one of his pictures needed my help. The young woman, Nancy Davis, was extremely upset because the name of another actress identified as Nancy Davis had appeared on the membership rosters of several Communist front groups and she was receiving notices of their meetings in her mail. As president of the Screen Actors Guild, I did a little research and found out that there was more than one Nancy Davis connected with show business—in fact there were several—and it took me only a few minutes to establish that Mervyn's Nancy Davis was not the one who belonged to several Communist front groups."

Reagan told the director to tell Nancy that if she had any trouble because of this case of mistaken identity, the guild would come to her defense. But that didn't satisfy her.

"Mervyn called back and said his assurances hadn't been enough to satisfy the young lady," Reagan wrote. "'She's a worrier,' he said. 'She's still worried that people are going to think she's a Communist. Why don't you give her a call? I think she will take it better from you than from me. Just take her out to dinner and tell her the whole story yourself.'"

So Reagan agreed to meet her at a restaurant on the Sunset Strip. "She was really steamed up over having been confused with someone else," he wrote. "Pretty soon, we weren't talking any more about her problem, but about her mother, who had been a Broadway actress, and her father, a prominent surgeon, and our lives in general."

Reagan then asked her if she'd ever seen Sophie Tucker, who was singing at Ciro's nightclub just down the street. To his surprise, Nancy said she'd never heard of Sophie Tucker, so they walked down to Ciro's to catch her act. They stayed for two shows, and they didn't part until three in the morning. They went to the Malibu Inn for dinner the following night.

"After that, we dated occasionally, but both of us continued to date other people, and now and then our paths would cross while we were out with someone else," Reagan wrote. "This had been going on for several months when I found myself booked for a speech to the Junior League Convention at the Del Coronado Hotel in San Diego. I wanted to share

the ride with someone and wondered who I should ask to join me. Then it suddenly occurred to me there was really only one person I wanted to share it with—Nancy Davis. I called her and she accepted and said she was a member of the Junior League in Chicago. Pretty soon, Nancy was the only one I was calling for dates. And one night over dinner as we sat at a table for two, I said, ‘Let’s get married.’”

They were married on March 4, 1952. It was his second marriage, her first. And four years later, they appeared in their first and only film together—*Hellcats of the Navy*—which, ironically, had been written by blacklisted writer Bernie Gordon. And in those days, Gordon, like all the other blacklisted writers in Hollywood, couldn’t even get a passport to leave the country.

“They would not give me a passport when I applied for it in 1952,” Gordon says. “They wanted me to give them information about my political connections, which I refused to do. So I didn’t have a passport from 1952 until the Supreme Court ruled in 1958 that they did not have the right to keep passports from people for political reasons. It was like being in prison.”

Gordon has nothing but contempt for Reagan, who testified as a friendly witness before the House Un-American Activities Committee in 1947, and who secretly provided the FBI with the names of Communist sympathizers in Hollywood.

“Reagan, who was nothing but a B-actor at the time, was the captain of this submarine, and I created a situation at the end where the submarine is trapped in the Sea of Japan, and a cable is wrapped around the propeller, so they’re trapped there and the Japanese boats are coming to drop depth charges on them,” Gordon recalls. “So naturally, the captain of the submarine, Ronald Reagan, our hero, gets out of the submarine and works under the water to disentangle the propeller, and of course he succeeds in doing this and they get away. But when he became president and such a reactionary SOB, all my friends said, ‘Why did you let him get out of the Sea of Japan? You should have left him there.’”

Ironically, a film written by a blacklisted writer would become Ronald and Nancy Reagan’s favorite film.

“When he became president of the United States, they always ran clips from this film of him making love talk to Nancy,” Gordon recalls with a laugh. “And this was the favorite film that they ran at the White

House all the time. And I thought that I should write to this guy, who denied there was a blacklist, although he was very instrumental in creating the blacklist. He was one of the worst reactionaries in Hollywood and an FBI informant. I thought I should write him a letter and say, 'You never knew it, but I was the blacklisted writer that wrote the script that became yours and Nancy's favorite film. Why not invite me to the White House for dinner and we could watch the movie together and I could tell you about the blacklist?'"

But Gordon never wrote the letter to Reagan. "I figured that he would ignore it, and I already had a big enough FBI file," he laughs.

# ★ CHAPTER 45 ★

## EVEN GOOD MEN DO BAD THINGS

### THE FRANK McCARTHY STORY

It's a strange place for a best picture Oscar. But there it is, proudly on display in a glass case inside the George C. Marshall Museum in Lexington, Virginia, just a few steps down the hall from the Nobel Peace Prize that was awarded to Marshall in 1953 for his work in rebuilding Europe after World War II—an effort that has come to be known as the Marshall Plan.

Frank McCarthy donated the Oscar to the museum in 1971. He'd won it for producing *Patton*. McCarthy, probably more than any other man, personified the confluence of Hollywood and the military. Before he was a filmmaker, McCarthy was a brigadier general in the army, and during the war, he'd been the top aide to Marshall, the general of the army who was the boss of all the army's other more famous World War II generals, including Dwight Eisenhower, George Patton, and Omar Bradley.

Some scholars believe that without Marshall and his brilliant organizational skills the war might have dragged on for many more years. Pres. Franklin Roosevelt picked Marshall to oversee both theaters of war, and Marshall picked McCarthy to be his right-hand man.

And McCarthy had clout. At one point during the war, he had to tell Harry Hopkins, FDR's top advisor, to stop talking to British Prime Minister Winston Churchill over the telephone on an unsecured line.

After the war, McCarthy decided to try his hand at show business. A natural-born showman, he went to work as a press agent for George Abbott, the legendary Broadway producer, and then came to Hollywood to work for Darryl F. Zanuck, the head of production at 20th Century Fox. His first credit as a movie producer came in 1951 on a World War II film called *Decision Before Dawn*, but the movie he really wanted to make was *Patton*.

It would take him twenty years to bring *Patton* to the screen, and it nearly didn't get made at all.

The Pentagon and Patton's family had serious reservations about allowing 20th Century Fox to bring Patton's story to the big screen. The family felt that such a film, to be based on a warts-and-all book by Gen. Omar Bradley, would be "most repugnant." And prior to granting approval for the film, the Pentagon warned McCarthy that the army would "not assist in the making of a film which depicts General Patton in any manner that would detract from the roles and accomplishments of his senior commanders." And George C. Scott, who would portray the pugnacious general, had his own doubts about making the film. In a 1970 *New York Times* interview, Scott said that his main problem "grew out of trying to serve too many masters. We had to serve the Pentagon, we had to serve General Bradley and his book, we had to serve the Zanucks. If you ride that many horses at the same time, you're going to have problems."

Scott needn't have worried: He was in good hands. McCarthy guided *Patton* through the maze of the Pentagon's approval process and finally got it to the big screen. And on Oscar night, when Scott refused to show up to accept his Academy Award for best actor, McCarthy graciously accepted the award on his behalf. At the end of the awards show, after all the other Oscars had been handed out, McCarthy's twenty-year-long labor of love was rewarded when he was called up to receive the Oscar for having produced the best picture of the year.

By all accounts, McCarthy was one of the coolest guys ever to hit Hollywood. Confident, friendly, and funny, he was a rock of integrity in a sea of insincerity. Everyone loved Frank McCarthy, even the cantankerous George C. Scott.

"Frank McCarthy was absolutely charming," recalls Capt. Bill Graves, the former head of the navy's film office in Los Angeles. "He was

one of the really neat guys in the movie business. He had the military's best interest at heart, and yet he knew what it took to make a movie. He was a real people-person and an easy guy to deal with. And when you get to that level, you have to be a neat guy and easy to deal with, or you don't survive."

"He was the nicest person I've ever met, but nice is too small a word," recalls Morgan Paull, one of the last surviving costars of *Patton* and one of McCarthy's best friends. "He was one of a kind. He was a great man and a cool guy. He was a tough guy but there was no chip on his shoulder and he had no ax to grind. He was the kind of guy you'd want to sit down and have a drink with. Frank was a gentleman in the original sense of the word—it's something you really don't see any more."

But even McCarthy had to kowtow to the Pentagon to get pictures made.

In 1955, not long after McCarthy was hired as a production executive at 20th Century Fox, investigative reporter Anthony Lewis won his first Pulitzer Prize for writing a series of newspaper articles that cleared a civilian employee of the navy who had been fired as a security risk after being wrongfully accused of being an associate of "known Communists."

In presenting the award to Lewis, the Pulitzer Prize committee said that his articles were "directly responsible for clearing Abraham Chasanow, an employee of the U.S. Navy Department, and bringing about his restoration to duty with an acknowledgment by the Navy Department that it had committed a grave injustice in dismissing him as a security risk."

Twentieth Century Fox bought the rights to the story and wanted to make a movie out of it called *Three Brave Men*, which would star Ernest Borgnine, who had just won the Academy Award for best actor for his performance in *Marty*.

But there was a problem. The navy hated the script. In fact, the navy tried to get the studio to kill the project before it went into production. Thomas S. Gates, acting secretary of the navy, suggested as much in a letter to the head of the studio.

"I appreciate the fact that your studio has offered to revise the script in accordance with our desires," Gates wrote to 20th Century Fox president Spyros Skouras in 1956. "I feel, however, that the fundamental basis

for the story is, in itself, inaccurate and therefore corrections of specific incidents alone would not solve the problem. I understand that your company already has a sizable financial investment in this production, and I realize that what I am suggesting may jeopardize this.”

What he was “suggesting” was that Fox should abandon the project altogether, as at least one other studio had already done after receiving a similar suggestion from the navy. Harry Cohn, autocratic boss of Columbia Pictures, had an earlier option on the story, but backed out after Pentagon officials told him what they would later tell Skouras, that they would rather not see a picture made about this subject at all.

Skouras could see how the navy might not like the script, but he knew that Gates was wrong when he said that the basic story was inaccurate. He knew that if anything, it was too accurate—at least for the navy. And besides, the navy had already admitted that it had been wrong about Chasanow. James Smith, the assistant secretary of the navy who ordered the case reopened, had even issued a formal apology for the navy’s mis-handling of the case.

Skouras was no hero. He’d bowed to political pressure before—most famously in 1947, when he and all the other studio bosses got together at the Waldorf Astoria Hotel in New York and signed a proclamation that would launch the Hollywood Blacklist by banning anyone from working in the movies who refused to testify before the infamous House Un-American Activities Committee.

But Skouras figured he could make *Three Brave Men* and make the navy happy, too. After all, Chasanow, played by Borgnine, and his lawyer, played by Ray Milland, were not the only “brave men” referred to in the film’s title. The other was Assistant Secretary of the Navy James H. Smith, played by Dean Jagger, who had overturned Chasanow’s firing.

Skouras didn’t need anything from the navy to make the film. He didn’t need their ships or their planes. But he wanted to keep them happy, so he would let them edit the script and take out anything they didn’t like, and put in whatever they wanted that would make them look good. And per the navy’s request, he would take out all references to anti-Semitism in the script and he would add an anti-Communism message. And he would assign Frank McCarthy to oversee the project and to make sure the military got what it wanted.

So first off, Skouras sent McCarthy and Philip Dunne, the film’s

writer and director, back to Washington to meet with Pentagon officials to discuss the navy's concerns. And there were a lot of concerns.

The navy told the filmmakers that they would have to rewrite the entire script. "Our problem is not merely individual speeches or scenes," the assistant secretary of the navy said in a letter to Skouras. "Your company has a unique opportunity of dramatizing the challenge which Communist subversion and espionage presents to our free institutions. We have suggested that the film should clearly show: (1) Conspiratorial nature of the Communist internal threat which gave rise to the government's security program; (2) A true picture of the complicated process by which the menace is combated to include the deep sense of personal responsibility demonstrated by those who must administer the program and (3) Our development through experience of procedures capable of defending our free institutions against this completely new kind of internal attack. . . ."

No problem, the filmmakers told the navy. When McCarthy and Dunne got back to the coast, they started to work on a new script that would incorporate all of the navy's ideas.

"Attached is a copy of the new script, which has been revised according to our recent conversations with representatives of the Navy Department," Dunne told McCarthy in a memo dated August 24, 1956. "I have endeavored in particular to meet the two main objections: That the published reports on which our script was based gave a distorted view of security procedures; and that the Chasanow case was far from being a typical case and that under current procedures it could not happen again."

Anthony Lewis, whose Pulitzer Prize-winning stories in the now-defunct *Washington Daily News* formed the basis for the movie, says today that it was the navy and the filmmakers who got their facts wrong—not him. The film, he says, turned the facts of the case "into a travesty."

Indeed, the navy would have never known it had persecuted an innocent man if Lewis had not revealed it in his articles. For it was only after Lewis's articles came out that the navy agreed to reopen the case and clear Chasanow of the charges against him.

The film, however, does not mention that it was Lewis's articles that prompted the navy to reexamine the case. In the movie, which was sanitized by the navy, the navy uncovers its own mistake and heroically sets it right.



"I went out to Hollywood and watched them shoot some of it," Lewis recalls. "I got to know Philip Dunne and we became lifelong friends. He was up against whatever decisions the studio had made with the Pentagon. They made the navy the hero: Navy makes mistake, navy reopens case, navy admits mistake, and they all live happily ever after. Well, that isn't what happened."

What really happened was that Chasanow had fallen victim to a witch-hunt that was started when a few of his disgruntled neighbors complained to the navy about him. Chasanow, who was also a lawyer, was the attorney for a group of neighbors who wanted to turn their federal housing project into a co-op. A few of his neighbors resisted the idea, however, and told the navy that Chasanow was a Commie sympathizer.

The navy launched an investigation, but its chief investigators—two men from the Office of Naval Intelligence—were later proven to be totally incompetent, making up allegations, reporting unsubstantiated rumor as fact, and putting words into the mouths of people who had never accused Chasanow of anything.

To mollify the navy, however, the filmmakers changed the identity of the investigators. Instead of working for the Office of Naval Intelligence, as they had in real life, they would be referred to in the film as "civilian investigators."

In the original script, the assistant secretary of the navy, whose name is changed to Rogers, blasts the poor quality of the investigation after he dismisses the charges against Chasanow.

The navy, however, didn't like that either.

In a memo to Don Baruch, head of the Pentagon's film office, Air Force Col. Sidney Rubenstein, deputy director of the Defense Department's Office of Personnel Security Policy, wrote: "On page 121, scene 162, in the statement by Rogers, there is certain language which may reflect unfavorably on the personnel of the investigative agencies of the Military Departments, specifically, the special agents in the Office of Naval Intelligence. The statements referred to are the third sentence, which reads: 'The quality of our investigation was beneath contempt,' and the eighth sentence, which reads, 'I am looking into the possibility of taking some punitive action against both the investigators and the informants.'"

In his memo, Colonel Rubenstein wrote: "The statement by Rogers

that punitive action may be taken against the investigators may tend to cast discredit upon investigative personnel as a whole. It certainly will not enhance the morale or prestige of the Military Department investigators. The great majority of these agents are capable, conscientious and hard-working men. A picture such as this, which will be seen by millions throughout the country, should avoid putting all agents in a bad light."

Indeed, the filmmakers would avoid doing this by simply deleting those offending lines of dialogue. And by making the incompetent investigators "civilian investigators," they not only avoided putting all military investigators in a bad light, they avoided putting *any* military investigators in a bad light.

In his articles, Lewis wrote that another serious flaw in the navy's investigation of Chasanow was its reliance on secret informants—men and women who were never called to testify at the hearings, and whose identities were never revealed to the accused. Indeed, the headline of one of his articles reads: "A Victim of Nameless Accusers."

The navy didn't like that angle, either. So Dunne rewrote it to their liking.

"This entire scene has been rewritten to bring our story into line with security procedures as outlined to us by the Navy representatives," he wrote in his memo to McCarthy. "Please note that here and throughout the script, the words 'informant,' 'secret informant' and 'reliable informant' have been eliminated. . . . Rogers no longer attacks the system of using anonymous informants. We believe that this is now phrased as the Navy representatives asked us to phrase it."

And at the request of the navy, the filmmakers would also shift the blame in the case from a faulty investigation by the Navy Department to the worldwide Communist conspiracy.

"Here I have given Rogers a new scene which is of great importance," Dunne told McCarthy after reading the navy's notes. "It emphasizes the fact that the Communists are basically to blame for the fact that we are forced to maintain a strict security program."

And to add insult to injury, the navy made the filmmakers take out any suggestion that anti-Semitism may have played a role in the neighbors' charges against Chasanow, who was Jewish.

In one of his articles, Lewis quoted Chasanow saying that several of his neighbors who were opposed to the plan to make their housing devel-

opment cooperative had raided a town meeting “shouting about dirty ‘Jew communists.’” In another article, Lewis quoted Chasanow’s wife talking about the same incident, which occurred shortly after her husband had been fired. “It was our first public appearance,” she said. “There was a terrible storm, and we were late. Before we got to the hall a gang came up and called [the president of the cooperative development plan, who was also a Jew] a dirty Jew and a Communist.”

The navy, however, didn’t want any of that in the movie.

“The word ‘Jew’ has been eliminated, as requested [by the Navy],” Dunne said in his memo to McCarthy. “Here and elsewhere, there is now no direct reference to the anti-Semitic aspects of the case.”

At the start of the movie, Ernest Borgnine, who plays Chasanow, speaks to the audience. He says: “Ladies and gentlemen, I am very proud to have played a part in bringing this story to the screen—a story that just had to win the Pulitzer Prize. What you will see actually happened here. But I assure you, it can never—it must never—happen again. You owe it to yourself to see the truth—the whole truth—about three brave men. Thank you.”

Unfortunately, after Dunne, McCarthy, and the navy had finished sanitizing the script, the truth was mostly left on the cutting-room floor.

“It was a white-wash,” says Phyllis Richman, a longtime reporter at the *Washington Post* and the daughter of Abraham Chasanow who died in 1992. “They wanted to make the navy look good.”

And the film did just that. And just to be sure that there would be no doubt that the navy was indeed the good guy in all this, the filmmakers added a scroll at the beginning of the film, which said: “It is a story of moral courage shown under great stress by three individuals—and an institution. That institution, whose shining deeds in behalf of freedom are written indelibly on the pages of history, is the United States Navy.”

“It was a rousing, patriotic movie showing what a good guy the navy was,” says Phyllis Richman. “They were just lying.”

Frank McCarthy would go on to produce several more movies, including *MacArthur*, the 1977 Universal film starring Gregory Peck as Gen. Douglas MacArthur. The film, which was a critical and box office flop, broke McCarthy’s spirit and his health.

“Dick Zanuck [Darryl’s son] had just made a deal at Universal and brought Frank along to do *MacArthur*, but then on the brink of starting production, Universal pulled millions of dollars from it, dumping great locations and sticking them with a totally unprepared director from TV at Universal,” recalls actor Morgan Paull, McCarthy’s longtime friend. “But it became too late to turn back—money had already been spent, so they had to make something. I believe it led to the declining health of Frank because it overwhelmed him with terrible depression even though it wasn’t Frank’s fault.”

*MacArthur* would be McCarthy’s last film. He would never again reach the highs of collaborating with the military to produce the Oscar-winning *Patton*, nor the lows of collaborating with the military to sanitize *Three Brave Men*.



Brig. Gen. (Ret.) Frank McCarthy, Oscar-winning producer of *Patton*, atop a tank during the film's production in Spain. Photo courtesy of Morgan Paull.



# ★ CHAPTER 46 ★

## COVERING UP THE COVER-UP

The phone rang at Don Baruch's home in Washington, DC, on the evening of June 28, 1954. It was George Dorsey calling. Dorsey, the Washington representative for Warner Bros. pictures, wanted to make sure that the Pentagon wasn't sore at the studio, which was getting ready to produce a movie that the army probably wasn't going to like. It was about the court-martial of Gen. Billy Mitchell, the army aviation visionary who was drummed out of the service in 1925 for criticizing the army's failure to recognize the importance of airpower. The film's writer and producer, Milton Sperling, who was also the son-in-law of the studio's boss, Jack Warner, had met with Pentagon officials a few days earlier to discuss the script. But the meeting hadn't gone well. The generals came away from the meeting convinced that the studio was out to do a hatchet job on the army.

Dorsey just wanted to make sure there were no hard feelings. He told Baruch, head of the Pentagon's film office, that the studio didn't want to blow its relationship with the military. They'd made a lot of movies together about World War II and the studio intended to make a lot more. No sense ruining a good relationship over one movie.

Baruch typed up his notes from his conversation with Dorsey: "He [Dorsey] said studio would not want to do project if they thought it would offend anyone in Army or Air Force."

With that one phone call, the stage was set for a classic case of self-censorship—and another case of the military changing history.

Keeping the military happy was important for the major Hollywood studios because they relied so heavily on military assistance to make their many World War II movies, which were as popular as westerns in those days. So in the earliest stages of developing the movie, which starred Gary Cooper as Gen. Billy Mitchell, Warner Bros. officials were mindful that they had to tread carefully so as not to offend the military.

The studio wouldn't need much assistance. After all, the military didn't have many old 1920s-era airplanes or battle ships at its disposal anymore. But they would need to look at the records of the court-martial. So before he finished writing the script, Sperling wrote a story treatment to show to the Pentagon in the hope that they would provide him with the trial transcripts and other research materials.

Baruch liked the story treatment for *The Court-Martial of Billy Mitchell* and thought it would make a good movie—good for the military, that is.

"Believe it shows good possibilities," Baruch wrote after reading the treatment. "Indicates that it can have heart."

In another memo, Baruch said he told Dorsey "that neither Army or Air Force interposed objections to a motion picture based on Billy Mitchell as long as it was treated in a factual manner."

That would be hard to do, however, because early on, the military decided that they would not even let the producers look at the transcripts of the court-martial. The record of that trial, held thirty years earlier, was still sealed, Baruch told Dorsey, and they couldn't be unsealed without the approval of the Mitchell family, which did not want them to be made public.

Without the actual court records, the producers would have to rely on newspaper accounts of the trial and books authored by the participants. The army, however, felt that the newspapers and books had gotten it all wrong, and that Sperling's script was filled with historical inaccuracies. And not only that, but the army also believed that Sperling had intentionally twisted the facts in the case to make the military look bad.

"In our opinion, the writers of this screenplay have distorted the facts and history which surrounds the court-martial of General Mitchell and have placed the Army in an unfavorable light throughout the script," wrote Lt. Col. H. D. Kight, chief of the army's public information division, in a memo to Baruch. "The script takes liberties with the actual facts

of the case which far exceed the normal dramatist's license. It seems more than a coincidence that almost all of the discrepancies between the facts as revealed by the record of the trial and the script tend to create the impression that Billy Mitchell was the victim of a deliberate sabotaging of justice by those responsible for seeing to it that Mitchell received a fair trial. This was no 'Star Chamber' proceeding."

No problem, Sperling told the army. In his notes for a key meeting with the army, Sperling said that he would take out any hint that Mitchell didn't receive a fair trial. "We will eliminate the air of injustice surrounding the trial," he wrote.

As for the "dramatic license" he had taken in the script, Sperling told the army: "If necessary, we will open the picture with a title stating the following:

"a. This picture is in essence the true story of Billy Mitchell.

"b. Some of the facts have been altered for dramatic purposes as the film is not a documentary.

"c. The factual alterations do not betray the spirit of the actual story.

"d. The reason that facts were not adhered to was that the Army record was not made available to the producers."

Not appreciating Sperling's attempt at humor, the army told him that they would never agree to such a title card.

And there were numerous other problems the army had with the project, one of which was the allegation in Sperling's treatment that there had been a navy cover-up involving the real-life crash of a navy dirigible in 1925 that killed fourteen crewmen, including its captain, Cdr. Zachary Lansdowne. The crash of the USS *Shenandoah*, one of the worst in naval aviation history, played a key role in prompting Gen. Billy Mitchell, a longtime friend of Lansdowne and his wife, to speak out against what he believed was incompetent leadership in the military.

After the crash of the *Shenandoah*—and after several planes in his old squadron had crashed—Mitchell held a press conference, where he told reporters: "These accidents are the direct result of incompetence, criminal negligence and the almost treasonable administration of our national defense by the Navy and the War Department."

That criticism led to Mitchell being court-martialed for insubordination, with Lansdowne's widow, Betsy, playing a key role in the trial.

In Sperling's treatment—as in real life—Mrs. Lansdowne appeared



as a defense witness at Mitchell's court-martial, testifying that her husband had told his superior officers that he thought it was unsafe to take the rickety ship up for a publicity cruise over a county fair in Ohio, but that he had been ordered to do so anyway. She testified that the Navy had attempted a cover-up during the investigation of the crash.

In his treatment, Sperling wrote that Mitchell was "touched and shocked" when Mrs. Lansdowne told him "the full story . . . includes certain efforts to 'cover-up'—to get her not to tell the full story."

Baruch, however, didn't like the idea of the Pentagon providing assistance to a movie that suggested that there had been a navy cover-up of a fatal accident. So he wrote a letter to Dorsey, the Warner Bros. representative, suggesting that this be deleted.

"Eliminate the inference that the Navy influenced any witnesses' testimony at any time," he told Dorsey. "We believe the same dramatic effect can be obtained by having the widow of the commanding officer of the dirigible remember certain things which she never previously revealed because she did not think they had any bearing on the investigation of the loss of the airship."

The army insisted that there had been no cover-up, that General Mitchell didn't even know Commander Lansdowne, and that he hadn't met Mrs. Lansdowne until after her husband's death.

"There is no evidence which connected Mitchell with Lansdowne or [that he] expressed any interest . . . in the Shenandoah until after the crash," wrote Lieutenant Colonel Kight in a memo to Baruch. "Mitchell then used the crash and Lansdowne's death for propaganda purposes."

When Baruch passed this information on to the producer, Sperling asked if the navy could put him in touch with Mrs. Lansdowne so he could ascertain the facts himself. The navy, however, said that that would be impossible. Mrs. Lansdowne, they told him, was dead.

Sperling didn't believe them. He did a little digging and found out that she was not dead at all. And once he found her, she signed an agreement that allowed Sperling to tell her story and the story of the cover-up of the crash that killed her husband.

As it turned out, the navy's cover-up of the *Shenandoah* crash was far more insidious than Sperling had even imagined. Before his death, Commander Lansdowne had written a letter documenting the fact that he had

pleaded with his superiors not to force him to take the *Shenandoah* on its fatal flight—that it was too dangerous to be flying the dirigible into what the navy’s own weathermen said would be severe electrical storms. Before he kissed his wife good-bye for the last time, he locked the letter in his safe at his home in Lakehurst, New Jersey. After his death, the safe was found broken open and his written protest stolen.

Hoping that he could still convince the Pentagon to help him, Sperling said that he would not use any of this in his screenplay. Instead, he would soft-peddle the cover-up.

In his notes for his meeting with the army, Sperling wrote: “We have purchased the rights to portray Mrs. Lansdowne, and she has stated that she and Mrs. Mitchell were great friends, and she has provided us with the information contained in the script relative to the events leading up to the crash of the *Shenandoah*.” He also wrote: “We will alter the circumstances surrounding Mrs. Lansdowne’s appearance on the witness stand. . . . Over [her] protests, we eliminated her actual testimony charging the Navy with attempts to influence her testimony because we did not wish to say that the Navy was capable of attempting to induce a witness to perjure herself. We restricted her to a re-statement of the events, as she told us, surrounding the fatal flight of her husband.”

That compromise is shown in the movie when a young Elizabeth Montgomery, who played Mrs. Lansdowne, is called to the witness stand. Sperling still has her saying that naval officers asked her not to testify about her husband’s concerns about the fatal mission—but not because of a navy cover-up. Rather, she says that it was just friendly advice from some of her husband’s old friends.

In the movie, when she is asked why she hadn’t come forward with this information earlier, she says: “Nobody asked me before. I was told not to testify by some friends of my husband’s—naval officers. They thought they were doing it for the sake of the Navy. They said it was the duty of a Navy wife to protect the service at all costs. They told me that my husband was a naval hero and that I owed it to his memory not to drag his name through the mud of a trial.”

In the film, as in real life, Mitchell was found guilty of insubordination and kicked out of the army. Only one of the thirteen judges—Gen. Douglas MacArthur—voted to acquit. History, however, has judged

Mitchell to be a hero and a visionary whose stand forced the military to reassess the importance of air power—a sea change that came just in time to win World War II.

Sperling never got the assistance he wanted from the military even though he bowed to their pressure and agreed to change history by covering up the cover-up of the *Shenandoah* crash.

# ★ CHAPTER 47 ★

## RELIGIOUSLY INCORRECT

**D**uring one of his many guest appearances on *The Tonight Show* in the 1970s, veteran character actor William Redfield laughed with host Johnny Carson about having once been saddled “with some of the worst movie dialogue ever written.” The movie he was referring to, he said, was *The Proud and the Profane*, a 1956 Paramount release starring William Holden and Deborah Kerr, which told the story of a young widow’s quest to find out how her husband died during World War II.

Redfield, who played an army chaplain in the film, didn’t know it at the time, but the reason his dialogue was so bad was because it had been rewritten under the watchful eye of the Armed Forces Chaplains Board.

The film’s producers had asked the military for assistance in making the movie, but because the film dealt with an army chaplain, the Department of Defense turned the script over to the Chaplains Board for review. And the chaplains didn’t like Redfield’s character, Chaplain Holmes, at all.

“The attached manuscript has been reviewed by the Armed Forces Chaplains Board,” the Department of Defense said in an internal memo, dated May 20, 1955. “It is the opinion of the Chaplains Board that the portrayal of the chaplain in this play is rather ridiculous and does not enhance the position of the military chaplaincy in any manner. The Chaplains Board does not recommend the endorsement of [the film] as it is outlined in the attached manuscript.”

A few days later, representatives from the studio met with the army chaplains to discuss the script. Don Baruch, the head of the DOD’s film office, also attended the meeting.

"Request consideration be given to assigning a chaplain to assist on the revision of the screenplay," Baruch wrote after the May 25th meeting. "As indicated at the meeting, Paramount is willing to rewrite the script to strengthen the characterization of the chaplain and overcome the objections expressed by the board. Cooperation on the production will not be extended without the board's acceptance of the revision."

The chaplains' chief complaint was that the chaplain in the original script had come to hate the character played by William Holden so much that he wanted to see him dead. After Holden narrowly escapes being murdered by another man, the chaplain tells Holden, "I wish he'd killed you."

In his long list of "suggested changes," R. Adm. E. B. Harp Jr., chief of chaplains, told the film's director, George Seaton: "Don't let him say 'killed you.' Make his expression and manner say it, thus permitting Holmes credit for some restraint in his emotion. Let his Christian instinct and training prevent the words, if not the feeling."

Harp also asked Seaton to give Chaplain Holmes more dialogue and actions of a religious nature. If Holmes is going to say that he hates Holden's character, "then at least have him say, 'I need the Lord's forgiveness—I hate the man,'" Harp told the director.

And Harp even suggested a new ending for the picture. In his list of "suggested changes," he wrote, "A sacramental act, or a hint of one, on the part of Chaplain Holmes, toward the end of the picture directed toward Lee [Kerr] and Black [Holden] would be consistent with the story and would picture the chaplain in the performance of his primary duty."

So now Seaton and the film's writers had to rewrite the script so that it was religiously correct. When they were through making all the changes requested by the navy chaplains, they resubmitted the script to the DOD and waited to see if they were going to get military cooperation.

In early July, they got the word. The chaplains liked the new script much better, and the filmmakers would get all the cooperation they wanted.

"It is our feeling that the revised script pertaining to the chaplain's role is acceptable in view of the total picture," wrote George Rosso, assistant director of the navy's chaplain's division, in a memo to the navy's chief of information.

So in the end, everyone was happy. But the moviegoing public never knew that a major motion picture had been changed by the military solely for religious reasons. Which may explain why Redfield's dialogue was so bad.

# ★ CHAPTER 48 ★

## TORPEDOED BY THE NAVY

Adm. Hyman Rickover, the autocratic and cantankerous father of the nuclear navy, was furious. It was the summer of 1954 and he'd just gotten word that Allied Artists, one of the leading independent motion picture studios in Hollywood, wanted to make a movie about him based on a book written by Clay Blair, the renowned military historian and decorated World War II submariner.

Rickover had almost single-handedly brought the navy into the nuclear age. He launched the USS *Nautilus*—the world's first nuclear submarine—only six months earlier, and now Hollywood wanted to make a movie about him and his sub. But Rickover wasn't interested. From his office at the Atomic Energy Commission, where he was the head of the Naval Research Branch, he ordered his assistant, Ed Wilbur, to call the Pentagon and tell them to kill the picture.

Wilbur dutifully placed the call on the morning of July 13 and asked to speak to Don Baruch, the head of the Pentagon's film liaison office. Baruch wasn't in, so Wilbur insisted that Baruch's assistant, Maj. Johanna Mueller, write down Rickover's message.

Cradling the phone, Mueller scribbled down what Wilbur said: "Admiral Rickover violently—repeat violently and underline three times—objects to the production of the atomic submarine story based on Blair's book."

After they hung up, Rickover had Wilbur call the Navy Department and tell them the same thing.

Baruch, who would head up the Pentagon's film liaison office for nearly forty years, was not surprised: Rickover was known to be a stubborn and extraordinarily difficult man to work with, traits that had held him back in the by-the-book navy for many years. So Baruch got on the phone and called Allied Artists and told them the bad news: Rickover was against their project. He then jotted down a memo and filed it away with all the others. "Received word from AEC about Rickover not wanting pix based on Blair's book. Passed info to Allied and studio said they would drop the project as they don't want to get in any hassle with anyone or cause any animosity. Rickover supposedly went to Navy with same attitude. . . . The Admiral told them he didn't want any picture to be made without his approval."

So just like that, the picture was killed.

And it wasn't that Rickover didn't like the book upon which the movie was to be based. In fact, he loved it, signing copies of it and giving them to his friends. Indeed, Blair and the admiral became close friends, and remained so until the day Rickover died in 1986.

Blair's book, titled *The Atomic Submarine and Admiral Rickover*, painted a very flattering portrait of Rickover and his efforts to modernize the navy's submarine fleet. Blair, who would go on to write twenty-five other books and to serve as editor of the *Saturday Evening Post*, was widely credited with having helped Rickover sell his idea of a nuclear submarine fleet to the navy, and of having helped Rickover to get the promotion from rear admiral to full admiral that had been denied him for so many years because of his repeated run-ins with the navy hierarchy. An embittered Rickover once said: "If you are going to sin, sin against God, not the bureaucracy. God will forgive you, but the bureaucracy won't."

Not long after Blair's book came out, Rickover got his "flag"—his stripe as a full admiral.

Neal Stevens, a reviewer of one of Blair's later books, wrote that Blair's book, and an article Blair had written about the *Nautilus* for *Life* magazine, "helped Rickover retain popular support to build the nuclear Navy."

So this was certainly not a question of the navy refusing to assist a film production that was going to make it look bad.

Pentagon officials and Hollywood producers who have gotten assistance from the Pentagon often argue that the military shouldn't be required to help film productions that put them in a bad light.

"They're not going to lend you their equipment and their personnel if you make them look bad," says producer Jerry Bruckheimer, who has made four films with the assistance of the military, including *Top Gun* and *Pearl Harbor*. "You wouldn't let them into your home if you knew they were going to trash it. It's the same thing."

But in the case of the Rickover project, there is no question that the film would have portrayed Rickover in a positive light. Rickover liked the book and its author, but he was suspicious of Hollywood—and of anything else that he couldn't control.

"That's the way Admiral Rickover was," recalls Blair's widow, Joan, who coauthored several books with her late husband, who died in 1998. "He was just that kind of guy. He liked some kinds of publicity, but I guess he felt he needed to be able to control everything completely and he wouldn't have liked the movie because he couldn't control it. It's not that he had anything against the book. There was absolutely nothing bad about him in it. Clay always felt that his book saved Admiral Rickover. He ran a mini-crusade to get Admiral Rickover his admiral's stripe."

And Rickover was not ungrateful.

"He always kept in close touch with us until he died," Joan Blair recalls. "He called at least once a month to see how things were going. We have a picture of the *Enterprise*, the first atomic carrier, with the sailors lined up in the shape of  $E=mc^2$ , and he [Rickover] signed it, saying 'Thank you for all your help.'"

Even so, Allied Artists dropped the project rather than cross Rickover and the navy. The studio would need the navy's ships and planes on future projects, so why make waves over one movie? You don't want a movie made? Fine, we won't make it.

But if this had been the norm in the world of book publishing, how many books might have been killed over the years by petulant admirals and generals who didn't want books written about them? That kind of censorship is unthinkable in publishing, but it happens all the time in Hollywood.

A year after Allied Artists dropped the Rickover project because the admiral didn't want a movie made about him, Allied Pictures asked the



navy for assistance in making a film called *The Smoldering Sea*. The navy, however, didn't like the script. "It seems like an attempt to do another 'Caine Mutiny,'" the Navy said in an internal memo. "It portrays the Navy in a very objectionable light. The public has been flooded with stories about Navy commanding officers who are just a step away from the psychiatric ward. . . . The Navy Department will not extend cooperation in the production of this motion picture." The film was never made.

The DOD can also withdraw its support after it has approved a film or TV project if it doesn't like the way the show is going. That's what happened in 1988 to the ABC TV show *Supercarrier*.

Steven De Souza was on a roll in the spring of 1988. His new screenplay *Die Hard* was wrapping production in Hollywood, while just a few miles south down the 405 Freeway, he was hard at work writing and producing his own TV series. The show, *Supercarrier*, started out as a two-hour TV movie, but it got good ratings and ABC picked it up as a weekly series.

De Souza had already gone through the painstaking process of securing DOD and navy approval for the series' two-hour pilot and now each new episode had to be vetted and approved by the navy, as well.

De Souza was no stranger to working with the military. He'd gotten his first big break in Hollywood as a writer on the long-running TV series *The Six Million Dollar Man*, which the Pentagon had supported. The show, about a former astronaut who was nearly killed and then rebuilt with robotic parts, depended heavily on the free stock footage of jet fighters and rocket launches provided by NASA and the Pentagon. But to get that footage, the producers had to let the DOD review and approve every script. One of De Souza's first scripts for *The Six Million Dollar Man* was a two-parter about a NASA space probe that goes haywire. NASA, however, didn't like that at all.

"We had to change it to a haywire Russian probe," De Souza recalls. "The show was so dependant on free footage from the Pentagon and NASA. The producers said that we're not going to be able to get all those many hours of footage if we say the government makes defective spacecraft. So we changed it. That was my first experience."

That was nothing, however, compared to the script changes he would have to make on *Supercarrier*.

The navy had given the show's production company permission to shoot on the USS *John F. Kennedy* aircraft carrier and at the naval base in Long Beach, California. But as the series progressed, the navy began to have more and more complaints—and demands for rewrites.

"That was a very volatile time for the navy," De Souza recalls. "No matter what we did, somebody would fly out and say, 'We're going to pull the plug if you do that.' And it would change from week to week. We were subjected to whimsical decisions without any written guidelines, except in the most general terms, like to 'promote the Navy's mission.'"

In one battle with the navy liaison officer attached to the show, De Souza had to change a line of dialogue because it dealt with technology that the navy considered "top secret."

"It was an episode in which a Russian pilot wanted to defect with his stealth aircraft," De Souza recalls. "They said, 'You can't say the word "stealth" because there is no such aircraft in the American arsenal. But if there were, that word would be classified, and you cannot say it on a show that's produced with the help of the military.' I said, 'Hey, wait. Everybody knows we have this. My son has a toy one.' They said, 'No.' So, they would only approve it when we had the captain say, 'So you mean to tell me this Russian plane has antiradar capabilities?'"

The producers were also getting caught in the ever-present rivalry between the "Black Shoe Navy," the sailors who run the ship, and the "Brown Shoe Navy," the pilots and crew who flew the planes.

"One time [we] were all approved and the Brown Shoe Navy showed up and said, 'You can't do that,'" De Souza recalls. "We had an enemy plane being shot down by a surface-to-air missile, and it became clear to me that the naval aviators did not want the audience to ever get the idea that anything but an airplane with a guy in it could shoot down an enemy plane. So we changed it to one of our guys in a plane shooting down another guy in a plane. A naval pilot must not only save the day, but also save every act-break and every scene, if possible. The red tape was endless with the Pentagon."

On another occasion, the script called for two of the navy pilots to get into a shouting match. But the ship's real-life admiral put a stop to that.

"Not on my watch," De Souza recalls. "Officers are gentlemen and would never argue." De Souza says he had to rewrite the dialogue to make it "completely civil on the script pages, and leave it to the director to have the actors raise their voices. I did an end run."

The navy was also a stickler for details, insisting that the actors' lines conform to the strictures of navy terminology, to the point of absurdity.

"They were very adamant that we had to use naval terminology every time," De Souza says. "If someone said, 'Let's go to lunch,' it had to be 'chow.' If it was 3 o'clock, it had to be 0300." In one case, actor Richard Jaeckel, who played Master Chief Sam Rivers on the show, had a line of dialogue that read: "Sir, sonar reports that we've got a Russian sub following us." But the navy made them change it.

"They made us say, 'Sir, we have a report from an outlying Sprance that one of their buoys has picked up a whisky on our six,'" De Souza recalls. The navy liaison officer told De Souza that carriers do not carry sonar—that they get their sonar information from buoys operated by Sprance-class destroyers that accompany the carriers. And "whiskey" is the correct navy term for a Russian submarine, while "six" is the navy's term for the carrier's tail.

"A lot of this was incomprehensible to the viewer," De Souza says. "And there was somebody there from the navy to make sure we said those exact words."

The navy even tried to get Jaeckel fired from the show because of his age. Jaeckel, who died in 1997, was sixty-one when the show was produced, and the navy argued that a sailor that old would not be allowed to work on a carrier as a master chief.

"They said no one in their sixties would be on a carrier," De Souza says. "We had to have a serious argument to have older characters on the show."

The final straw came after an argument about the sixth episode of the series. There were two problems with that episode. The first was that the villain in the story—a traitor—was an American military officer. The second problem was that the script called for the carrier to be disabled after hitting an enemy mine.

To mollify the navy, De Souza agreed to change the villain from a military man to a civilian.

"We rewrote the script so that the American who was a traitor is from the State Department, not the military," says De Souza. "They [the navy] were fine with that. But they said you cannot have a carrier disabled. They said there is nothing that could disable a carrier."

The script called for the carrier to hit an old mine left over from World War II. This was a key plot point because the scene required that the carrier be delayed en route to rescuing some Americans who were being evacuated from a Third World country.

“That’s what broke the back of this show,” De Souza recalls. “An admiral flew out to see us. They were infuriated. They said that was impossible for an American ship to hit a mine—that it would have been picked up [by sonar], and even if it wasn’t, the hulls are so strong as to be impervious.”

De Souza says that at the very moment the admiral was telling him that such a scenario would be impossible, the phone rang in the admiral’s office with some ironic news.

“There was a phone call literally at that moment,” De Souza recalls. “The admiral said, ‘What? When?’ After he hung up, he said an American ship, a navy cruiser, had just hit a mine left over from Vietnam.”

Even so, the admiral insisted that the producers remove the mine scene from the show. And when the producers refused, the navy withdrew its support, which ended up killing the show.

“We absolutely had to have the ship stopped in the scene,” De Souza says. “I went to Chuck Fries [the producer] and said, ‘I don’t know how to make it work if the carrier doesn’t get stuck.’ So we went ahead and had it hit a mine. There was no damage, but it had to proceed slowly after that. But that was still too strong a brew for the navy, and they pulled out. It really was akin to making a picture in Russia with the commissar. That’s what it ultimately became.”

The producers managed to shoot three more episodes using stock footage of the carrier, but then abandoned the series.

“The plug got pulled,” De Souza says. “The producers did not want to come up with the extra money. The math was that without the navy, it was going to cost another \$75,000 [per episode]. We couldn’t continue on because we couldn’t afford it without the navy.”

Producer Chuck Fries says that his relationship with the navy “was good up until the point when they decided they didn’t like what we were doing. The navy provided us with everything—the planes, the ships. The pilot episode was easy, but ABC decided they wanted the show to have more action and the navy didn’t like that. As we went along, they became

more and more unhappy with the trend of the series. So they eventually said they can't cooperate any longer, and then we lost the use of ships and planes, and that was it."

Asked if he still has any of his correspondence with the military about the demise of the show that he could share, Fries says that he was reluctant to release those documents because "I don't want to sink myself. I'll never get another show [with military assistance]."

# ★ CHAPTER 49 ★

## HEROES AND VILLAINS

**T**he story of Hollywood's decades-long collaboration with the Pentagon has plenty of villains and a handful of heroes. But what distinguishes the two? What makes a hero? What makes a villain? In real life, villains almost always see themselves as heroes, while heroes almost always see themselves as ordinary men and women who were only doing their jobs. It's often left to the history books to sort out who's who.

And so, since this is a book about the history of a wide-ranging conspiracy against the First Amendment between Hollywood and the Pentagon—about collaborators, in the worst sense of the word, who have plotted to put military propaganda into American movies and TV shows—then those who have allowed this to happen can only be considered the villains, while those who resisted it must be seen as the heroes.

So if the Academy Awards were to honor filmmakers who refused to change their scripts in return for Pentagon assistance, and to dishonor those who did, the Oscar ceremony might go something like this:

And the nominees for Best Hero are:

- Kevin Costner, who, as one of the producers of *Thirteen Days*, stood up against Pentagon censors by refusing to alter the facts of the Cuban Missile Crisis, and who, as an actor, never appeared in a single movie that received Pentagon approval.

- Clint Eastwood, who stubbornly stood his ground and refused to rewrite *Heartbreak Ridge* to mollify the military.
- Director Oliver Stone, who refused to alter his vision of the Vietnam War—a war in which he had actually fought—in order to get military assistance for *Platoon*, *Born on the Fourth of July*, and *Heaven and Earth*.
- Director Robert Aldridge, who refused to cave in to Pentagon pressure to rewrite *Attack*—a film that showed an enlisted man killing a cowardly officer during World War II—and who was one of the few Hollywood filmmakers ever to go public with the complaint that the Pentagon's refusal to assist films they didn't like was tantamount to censorship.
- Writer Douglas Day Stewart and director Taylor Hackford, who stood up to the Pentagon and refused to change *An Officer and a Gentleman* to make it a recruiting poster for the navy.

And the nominees for Best Villain are:

- Phil Strub, the current head of the Pentagon's film liaison office, who has made more than one hundred producers change their films and TV shows so that they portray the military in a more positive light.
- Don Baruch, Strub's predecessor, who during the 1950s, 1960s, 1970s, and 1980s made hundreds of filmmakers change their scripts to cast the military in a more positive light.
- Jerry Bruckheimer, who has caved in to Pentagon demands more often than any other producer in Hollywood—on such films as *The Right Stuff*, *Armageddon*, *Black Hawk Down*, and *Pearl Harbor*.
- Director John Woo, who made every change the military asked for on *Windtalkers*, even though the changes altered history and helped make his movie a box office flop.
- Walt Disney, who allowed the Pentagon to use *The Mickey Mouse Club* as a recruiting tool to target his young viewers.

And the nominees for Best Supporting Hero are:

- Producer Peter Almond, who, along with Kevin Costner, refused to

bow to Pentagon pressure and change *Thirteen Days* to suit the Pentagon's faulty sense of history.

- Congressman Melvin Price (D-IL), one of the few elected officials ever to speak out against the Pentagon's film office, who in 1956 accused the Pentagon of "a shameful attempt to impose censorship on a film" after the Pentagon refused to provide cooperation to Robert Aldridge on the movie *Attack*.
- Actor Victor Millan, whose role-of-a-lifetime was left on the cutting-room floor after the commandant of the Marine Corps decided that dialogue spoken by his character in *Battle Cry* might be used as "anti-American propaganda by the Communists."
- Cy Roth, the obscure writer, producer, and director of low-budget movies who complained to his congressman and anyone else who would listen, and who fought the Pentagon all the way to the White House—only to be investigated by the FBI for his troubles—before finally caving in to the Pentagon's demands to take the Jewish and African American characters out of his movie *Air Strike*.
- Screenwriter Darryl Ponicsan, whose scripts for *Cinderella Liberty* and *The Last Detail* were made despite the fact that the producers couldn't get assistance from the Pentagon, and whose screenplay for *Countermeasures*, a story about a murder onboard a nuclear aircraft carrier, was killed because the producers couldn't get cooperation from the navy.

And the nominees for Best Supporting Villain are:

- Jack Valenti, the longtime head of the Motion Picture Association of America, who not only lobbied to keep the Pentagon from phasing out Phil Strub's job, but who allows the military to screen films at the MPAA's offices in Washington before they are shown to the public.
- The Writers Guild of America, which claims to fight for the creative rights of its members, but which has never once complained about the Pentagon forcing the guild's members to rewrite their scripts to make the military look better. In fact, WGA West president Charles Holland, a former army officer and a former top writer on *JAG*, the most military-manipulated TV series of all time, sees



nothing wrong with the Pentagon using films and TV series as recruiting tools. In fact, he thinks it's a good idea. "I think that it is true that whenever you do a movie, be it *Officer and a Gentleman* to *Clear and Present Danger*, that from the military's point of view, they want it to look attractive to join the military," Holland said in an October 2001 interview with the author. "Even if it's *Biloxi Blues* and people act like they are in hell when they are in basic training, there still is something about it that is attractive and I think that is purposeful. I freely admit that from my point of view, that is not bad because it's a dirty job. It's difficult, it's painful, it's full of fear and sacrifice. And we live in a society where that's not cool anymore. If you want people to go into firefights, you've got to romanticize it." Ironically, Holland's own military record was called into question on January 17, 2004, when the *Los Angeles Times* reported that there was no record that he had ever served in the army's Special Forces, as he claimed. This allegation—which Holland denied but never disproved—was a big embarrassment to the Writers Guild, although it should be even more embarrassed by the fact that it has never tried to stop the Pentagon from changing the content of its members' scripts.

- John Wayne, who set out to make a propaganda film for the Pentagon called *The Green Berets* and then concealed the Pentagon's involvement in shaping the film by agreeing that the screen credits would not contain the usual acknowledgment of the Pentagon's cooperation.
- Every head of a major Hollywood studio who has ever forced a producer to make a deal with the Pentagon so that they can shave some money off a film's budget.
- Every congressman and senator who has ever voted for an appropriations bill that included funding for the Pentagon's censors, ignoring the First Amendment, which states: "Congress shall make no law . . . abridging the freedom of speech. . . ."



## CONCLUSION

No society is free that allows its military to control the arts. In America, it is not only unconscionable, it is unconstitutional. Allowing the world's most powerful military to place propaganda into the world's most powerful medium—unchecked and unregulated—for over fifty years has certainly helped the Pentagon get more recruits for the armed forces and ever-increasing appropriations from Congress, but what is its long-term effect on the psyche of the American people?

In North Korea, the people are required to have speaker boxes in their homes that they can't turn off and that constantly pipe in propaganda. In America, we can turn off our television sets, but the military propaganda that is inserted into our television programs in the form of films and TV shows is done so subtly that the American people don't even know it's there.

Propaganda is used in North Korea to make the people there more accustomed to being constantly on a war footing. But might this not be an unintended consequence in the United States as well of allowing the Pentagon to shape, sanitize, and censor American films and television programs? Certainly, the American people have become a more warlike people in the last fifty years.

In 1940, the American people refused to go to war against Nazi Germany and Imperial Japan even as they overran Europe and Asia. Pres.

Franklin Roosevelt knew then that the American people would not support a war unless the United States was attacked first.

But today the American people seem willing to go to war at the drop of a hat.

In the 1960s, the Vietnam War was launched on the flimsiest of pretexts: That North Vietnamese gunboats had allegedly attacked U.S. warships—a charge we now know to be false. In the 1980s, Libya was bombed by American jet fighters because a suspected Libyan terrorist had blown up a discothèque in Germany. In the 1990s, the United States attacked Iraq because it invaded Kuwait. And in 2003, the United States attacked Iraq again because Pres. George W. Bush said it was harboring weapons of mass destruction—weapons that were never found. And most Americans supported these wars.

And now Bush says that the United States has abandoned its decades-long policy of never using nuclear weapons in a first-strike attack. And the American people seem to support this, as well.

Is it possible that being saturated with military propaganda in films and TV shows over the last fifty years has made us a more warlike people? Is it possible that it could have had no effect?

The stakes are too high for these questions to remain unanswered, let alone unasked. The very character of the American people may be at stake.

The Pentagon has bribed, coerced, and intimidated filmmakers long enough. For too long, Hollywood has cravenly caved in to the Pentagon's demands to change its stories to make the military look good. It is time to put an end to the disgraceful relationship between Hollywood and the Pentagon.

Congress should act. It has neglected its oversight responsibilities long enough. Congress, which is supposed to keep an eye on the way the Pentagon is spending the taxpayers' money, has only asked the Pentagon to explain its relationship with Hollywood twice—once in 1956 and again in 1969—and both times the Pentagon lied.

Congress should launch its first full and complete investigation into the Pentagon's role in the filmmaking process. Congress funds the Pentagon's activities, and Congress should stop it. The First Amendment to the Constitution states that "Congress shall make no law . . . abridging the freedom of speech. . . ." But by approving appropriation bills that fund the Pentagon's film office, Congress has done just that.

The Writers Guild of America should act. The WGA, which claims to protect the creative rights of its members, has never once complained about the Pentagon altering its members' scripts. It has been silent long enough. The WGA should go on record opposing this blatant form of censorship, and it should insist in its next round of contract negotiations that companies that sign the WGA's contract will no longer be allowed to show a writer's script to anyone outside the company. This would effectively stop the Pentagon from ever looking at another writer's script.

The American public should also take action. They should write angry letters to Congress demanding an investigation. And a class-action lawsuit should be filed on behalf of all moviegoers seeking a court-ordered injunction to stop the Pentagon from tampering with the First Amendment rights of screenwriters, and to protect the public from being bombarded with military recruiting propaganda being placed in films without the public's knowledge. The public should also boycott any film—whether shown in theaters or on home video or DVD—that has been made with the cooperation of the military. If an informed and outraged public takes the economic incentive out of such collaborations, the practice will stop immediately.

Even without Pentagon subsidies, Hollywood will still turn out plenty of movies and TV shows about the military. That's because of one simple fact: Hollywood loves heroes, and the military has more of them than anyone else. Hollywood doesn't need police department subsidies to turn out movies about hero cops. It doesn't need subsidies from the American Medical Association to produce shows about heroic doctors. It doesn't need fire department subsidies to turn out TV shows about heroic firemen.

Hollywood will still want access to the military's tanks, jets, submarines, and aircraft carriers, and the Pentagon will still be able to show off its hardware—and turn a profit—by making it available to bona fide producers under a schedule of uniform fees. It would cost producers more money, but in the end, it will be cheaper than scrapping the First Amendment.





## SOURCES

### Screenwriters:

Ron Bass, <i>Gardens of Stone</i>	May 2003
Joe Batteer, <i>Windtalkers</i>	January 2002
Jim Burnstein, <i>Renaissance Man</i>	January 2003
James Carabatsos, <i>Heartbreak Ridge</i>	March 2003
Lewis Carlino, <i>The Great Santini</i>	June 2002
Marjorie David, <i>Maria's Lovers</i>	March 2003
Steven De Souza, <i>Supercarrier</i> , <i>Six Million Dollar Man</i>	June 2001
Bruce Feirstein, <i>Goldeneye</i> , <i>Tomorrow Never Dies</i>	January 2002
Bernie Gordon, <i>Hellcats of the Navy</i>	April 2002
Charles Holland, president of the Writers Guild of America West	October 2001
Larry Moskowitz, <i>JAG</i>	July 2002
Frank Pierson, <i>Citizen Cohn</i>	June 2001
Darryl Ponicsan, <i>The Last Detail</i> , <i>Cinderella Liberty</i>	June 2001
John Rice, <i>Windtalkers</i>	January 2002
Douglas Day Stewart, <i>An Officer and a Gentleman</i>	April 2002
Joseph Stinson, <i>Heartbreak Ridge</i>	February 2003
John Sacret Young, <i>A Rumor of War</i>	February 2003
Ed Zuckerman, <i>The Agency</i>	September 2001

## Producers:

Peter Almond, <i>Thirteen Days</i>	October 2001
Jerry Bruckheimer, <i>Top Gun, Pearl Harbor,</i> <i>Armageddon, Black Hawk Down</i>	December 2001
Bill Carraro, <i>The Tuskegee Airmen</i>	December 2002
Fred Caruso, <i>The Presidio</i>	January 2003
Terence Chang, <i>Windtalkers</i>	February 2002
Sara Colleton, <i>Renaissance Man</i>	August 2002
John Davis, <i>Behind Enemy Lines</i>	September 2001
Marty Elfand, <i>An Officer and a Gentleman</i>	April 2002
Chuck Fries, <i>Supercarrier</i>	January 2002
Dan Goldberg, <i>Stripes</i>	October 2002
David Manson, <i>A Rumor of War</i>	March 2003
Howard Meltzer, <i>The Pentagon Wars</i>	May 2001
Mace Neufeld, <i>Clear and Present Danger,</i> <i>The Hunt for Red October</i>	February 2002
Charles Newirth, <i>Forrest Gump</i>	October 2002
Fred Weintraub, <i>My Father, My Son</i>	September 2002

## Directors:

Taylor Hackford, <i>An Officer and a Gentleman</i>	April 2002
Rod Lurie, <i>The Last Castle</i>	January, 2003
Penny Marshall, <i>Renaissance Man</i>	September 2002
Robert Markowitz, <i>The Tuskegee Airmen,</i> <i>Afterburn, The Wall</i>	December 2002
Ridley Scott, <i>Black Hawk Down, GI Jane</i>	December 2001
Oliver Stone, <i>Platoon, Born on the Fourth of July</i>	March 2001

## Authors:

Mark Bowden, <i>Black Hawk Down</i>	January 2002
Clive Cussler, <i>Raise the Titanic</i>	March 2003
Nicholas Proffitt, <i>Gardens of Stone</i>	May 2003
Lawrence Suid, <i>Guts &amp; Glory</i>	May 2001
Leon Uris, <i>Battle Cry</i>	December 2002

## Military:

R. Adm. Jack A. Garrow, chief of information, U.S. Navy	March 2003
Maj. David Georgi, army technical advisor	February 2002
Capt. Steve Goyen, U.S. Army Reserves	May 2003
Capt. Bill Graves, navy technical advisor	March 2003
Cdr. Jeff Loftus, director of the Coast Guard's film office	August 2001
Capt. Matt Morgan, head of USMC's film office	January 2002
Kathy Ross, head of the army's film office	April 2002
Robert Sims, assistance secretary of defense for public affairs	February 2003
Phil Strub, head of the Pentagon's film office	December 2000
James Webb, secretary of the navy	September 2002
Al Zwirner, army provost marshall and technical advisor on <i>The Presidio</i>	January 2003

## Others:

Floyd Abrams, First Amendment attorney	April 2003
Joan Blair, widow of author Clay Blair	January 2002
Chase Brandon, the CIA's liaison to the entertainment industry	August 2001
Jared Chandler, Hollywood weapons supplier	May 2003
Irwin Chemerinsky, USC professor of constitutional law	April 2003
Beverly Cooney, widow of Adm. David Cooney, chief of Navy information	March 2003
Leonard Hirshan, Clint Eastwood's agent	March 2003
John Horton, film industry liaison to the Pentagon	February 2002
Anthony Lewis, Pulitzer Prize-winning journalist	December 2002
Victor Millan, actor, <i>Battle Cry</i>	November 2002
Louise Millan, wife of actor Victor Millan	November 2002
Stuart Neumann, location manager, <i>Clear and Present Danger</i>	January 2002
Richard O'Connor, Marble Arch production executive, <i>Raise the Titanic</i>	March 2003



Morgan Paull, actor, <i>Patton</i>	May 2003
Fess Parker, actor <i>Battle Cry</i>	November 2002
Phyllis Richman, <i>Washington Post</i> reporter	December 2002
Lisa Rawlins, Warner Bros. executive	September 2001
Duncan Shaw Jr., president of Devil Pups, Inc.	August 2002
Ray Smith, film industry liaison to the Pentagon	April 2002
Jonathan Turley, George Washington University constitutional law professor	April 2003



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