

Behavior of journalists in crisis situations

Analysis of case studies from Ukraine:

EXTRA: PRESS markings

From the Russian point of view, journalists belong either on one side or the other in this war. On the RUS side, there are embedded journalists and a few "influencers" among the fighters. On the UKR side, there are very many national and international journalists, as well as "influencers" and ordinary citizens who upload their pictures and films.

For the RUS side, any journalist who is not with their own forces is part of UKR or Western propaganda and therefore an enemy or at least a danger.

PRESS markings are used to clearly identify journalists as non-combatants to be protected.

1. in addition to the international PRESS marking, the marking should also be in the national language. A light-dark contrast is (super)vital to be recognizable even in twilight and smoke, as well as by military optics and night vision devices. The letters TV are not to be used due to the RUS vehicle markings (O, Z, V).

2. PRESS markings on persons must be legible from 100 meters and on vehicles from at least 200 meters.

3. on the vehicle, the press marking should be placed on the outside and from all sides. The light reflection of the windows makes signs disappear behind the window.

4. markings should also be placed on the protective vest and helmet, visible from all sides. But also, when the protective vest is taken off, a PRESS marking must be visible.



Here in the photo the combination of PRESS marking on the front and back of the vest and on both sides of the helmet.

5 There is no official "PRESS" flag with which journalists can identify themselves. But because of the clear signal effect, it should be thought about. Following the OSCE flag, the same layout with the letters PRESS could be used.



6. everyone in the team, including local drivers, should wear press markings.

7. other color markings of any kind (including flags) are occupied in this war (yellow, blue, red and white) and not to be used.

Effect of PRESS marking against UKR fighters:

Previous analysis has shown that press markings have resulted in support and also medical care. Furthermore, every UKR fighter knows that they benefit from any coverage on their side of the front. Therefore, it cannot be assumed that UKR forces are intentionally attacking journalists. This is where the PRESS marking can have its full protective effect.

Effect of press marking against RUS fighters:

For the RUS fighters, all people who do not belong to their own forces are a threat:

Population, civilian demonstrators, UKR army, journalists.

Journalists carry equipment suitable for military reconnaissance and reporting. Stored footage and images of journalists show RUS forces and UKR forces. In the context of information gathering, it is in the interest of RUS forces both to obtain information about UKR positions, but also to keep information about their own positions secret. In the area of media warfare, detrimental material is to be destroyed. Therefore, the taking away of journalistic equipment is to be expected. In any case, a direct attack on journalists is bad propaganda, so from the Russian point of view it must be stopped. Whether this was understood by all units/fighters is doubtful. Therefore, a consideration to use a PRESS marking against RUS forces is not feasible. Without a marker, however, the journalist will always be perceived as an enemy reconnaissance officer and treated as such.

Protection of UKR forces:

Anyone traveling from UKR area to RUS area should not have any information about UKR forces on their storage systems. Therefore, always immediately upload all recordings to a cloud and delete them on all devices.

Work with the camera:

The cameraman has an additional risk: at first glance, he looks like a Panzerfaustschütze from the front:



Such situations with limited visibility (twilight, smoke) and from a distance of 200 meters give an unclear picture: a soldier has only a fraction of a second to decide whether to shoot here or not. This is where the PRESS marking can save lives.

Addition:

The use of camera drones can be a good compromise between reporting and self-protection in dangerous situations.