

MBN

JOURNALISTIC CODE OF ETHICS

MBN's mission is to broadcast news which is consistently accurate, authoritative, objective, balanced and comprehensive. MBN strives to serve as a model of the free marketplace of ideas and a free press in the American tradition, promoting freedom, democracy and human rights, including freedom of religion. Additionally, MBN has a mandate to present the policies of the United States government in a clear and effective manner through news reporting and responsible discussion.

ACCURACY

MBN journalists shall do their utmost to ensure that all broadcasts are factually accurate. Where doubt or controversy exists on significant points of fact, information must be based on at least two independent sources. No program material shall be broadcast that is based on rumor or unsubstantiated information.

Any documents, video or audio obtained from outside sources must be properly authenticated.

Factual errors will be corrected on-air as soon as possible.

IMPARTIALITY

Information shall be reported or discussed in a factual, objective context that enhances understanding of the events and issues and provides clarity without distortion or bias. Objective language shall be used to reflect events and issues accurately and dispassionately. Broadcasters shall present opposing or differing views accurately and in a balanced manner on all issues. When groups or individuals whose views are important for balanced programming decline to comment, it is appropriate to note this on the air.

MBN shall be independent from any political party, ruling or opposition group or organization, émigré organization, commercial or other special-interest organization, or religious body, whether inside or outside the broadcast area; and shall not endorse or advocate any specific political, economic, or religious viewpoint.

CONTROVERSIAL/SENSITIVE ISSUES

MBN does not provide an open platform for terrorists or those who support them. This has long been the policy of all United States international broadcasting organizations and grantees, and MBN fully complies with this policy. MBN will not broadcast live speeches or interviews

with persons designated as terrorists unless the broadcast has been previously approved by the Vice President for News, or his or her designee. When the broadcast will be on the radio, the Radio Sawa news director should be consulted.

ANALYSIS, COMMENTARY AND EDITORIALS

All broadcasts should contain sufficient background information and explanation to enable the audience to better understand the significance and consequences of information being reported.

Journalists shall not insert their personal opinions or judgments in factual reports at any time.

Failure to abide by this policy constitutes grounds for termination of employment.

Material that is primarily analytical will be clearly labeled as such, to distinguish it from factual news reporting and commentary.

* *Analysis* provides background information, explanation, and differing authoritative views on an issue or event—but states no personal opinion on the part of the speaker. *Analysis* is preferred over *commentary*.

* *Commentary*, which is to be clearly labeled as such, is analytical in content and judicious in tone but reflects the personal judgment or opinion of the speaker on a particular issue.

TONE OF MODERATION AND RESPECT

Broadcasts, including talk shows and debates, shall at all times maintain a calm and professional tone and shall project a model of civilized, reasoned discourse, as well as respect for the human rights of all persons. Broadcasters and guests shall not make religious, ethnic, socio-economic or cultural slurs upon any person or groups and shall observe common standards of etiquette and taste.

Broadcasts shall not contain material which could be construed as an incitement to violence.

Programming on disturbances or other tense situations must be balanced and factual. MBN will not permit its programs to be used as a platform for terrorist organizations.

AVOIDANCE OF ADVOCACY

MBN supports freedom, democracy and the human rights common to democratic states. However, MBN does not advocate the adoption of specific policies or legislation, or endorse or oppose candidates for elected or appointed office.

ETHICAL CONDUCT

MBN staff members and contributors shall maintain the highest ethical standards in all conduct, taking particular care to avoid any conflict of interest, or the appearance thereof, in their relations with individuals, groups and/or political or commercial interests inside or outside the broadcast area. MBN staff members and contributors shall remain free of associations and activities that could, or could appear to, compromise their integrity, damage their credibility or jeopardize their journalistic independence. They shall refuse gifts, favors, fees, free travel and special treatment, and shun secondary employment, political involvement, public office and service in community organizations to the extent any of these could compromise journalistic integrity. MBN staff members and contributors shall in no way abuse their status as public figures, or the good reputation of MBN, to promote personal interest or gain.

In keeping with this policy, MBN employees are not permitted: (a) to appear on radio or television programs, in print, or in commercial advertising under their own names or pseudonyms; (b) to write (under their own names or pseudonyms) for publication (electronic or otherwise) on any topic; or (c) to serve in an advisory capacity for any media organization or political or advocacy group without the express written prior permission of the Vice President for News.

INTERVIEWS

Interviews must be unrehearsed and specific questions must not be submitted in advance. It is permissible to discuss in advance with the interviewee the purpose of the interview and the general subjects to be covered. All recorded interviews are subject to editing and no MBN staff member or contractor may represent to anyone that an interview will be carried in full. The raw or edited film, tape, other electronic version of the interview or transcript may not be shown to or played for an interviewee or representative in advance of its broadcast, nor may the interviewee or a representative participate in the editing of the interview.

EDITING AND PRODUCTION STANDARDS

All persons who edit reports, interviews and other materials for air shall ensure that their editing reflects fairly, honestly and without distortion what was seen and heard by MBN reporters and recorded by our cameras and microphones.

Interviews are to be edited in a straightforward manner, preserving, even in short sound bites, the sense of the interview. Answers may not be taken out of context or edited together in a manner to change their meaning. The narration leading to a sound bite must reflect the question that elicited the response.

PLAGIARISM

When a journalist at MBN uses facts gathered by any other organization, those facts must be attributed. This policy applies to material from newspapers, magazines, books, CDs and broadcasts, as well as to material taken from news agencies like Reuters, Agence France Presse and the Associated Press (for example, “the Secretary told Reuters”). In other words, even when we purchase news services, we do not treat the reporting done by others as reporting done by us. MBN’s preference, when time and distance permit, is to do our own reporting and verify another organization’s story; in that case, the reporter, correspondent or anchor need not attribute the facts. But even then, as a matter of courtesy and candor, the reporter, correspondent or anchor should credit an exclusive to the organization that first broke the news (for example, “CBS reported this morning ...”).

Attribution to another news organization, however, does not mean MBN’s journalists can broadcast rumors or allegations that would not independently meet the test of MBN’s own reporting standards, as set forth in this policy. Rumors and allegations must satisfy MBN’s standard of newsworthiness, taste and plausibility before being broadcast, even when attributed. And when the need arises to attribute, that is a good cue to consult with a senior producer or editor about whether broadcast is warranted at all. Thus, MBN would not permit the broadcast of a statement like this – “One Commissioner apparently accused another Commissioner of lying about the grain statistics, according to the Associated Press” – unless MBN had independently confirmed, in accordance with this policy, that “One Commissioner accused another Commissioner of lying about the grain statistics,” in which case attribution would not be necessary.

In cases when it makes a difference whether MBN staffers or stringers directly witnessed a scene, MBN should distinguish on air between personal interviews and telephone or E-mail interviews, as well as written statements. [*This policy was adapted from the plagiarism policy of The New York Times, which is available on-line at <http://www.asne.org/index.cfm?id=408>.]*