

Rod Rodriguez ([00:00](#)):

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Max Brooks ([01:02](#)):

You know, we haven't done a good enough job on really looking at information in national security. We used to win world war II. We created. We recruited Hollywood to make sure that German propaganda, Tokyo Rose, they couldn't penetrate us, they couldn't break us, and after the end of the cold war, we sort of let everybody go and we need to understand that everybody has a role to play. If you work in social media, you have a role to play. If you're a journalist, especially if you're an elected official, if you're going to lose an election, but you're going to save lives, you have a duty and let's all, let's not forget this. This is a war and everyone has to play their part.

Rod Rodriguez ([01:48](#)):

For the last couple of weeks we've been talking about COVID 19 back in March we dropped our coronavirus special edition, which featured max Brooks. Now in that interview, he talked about the fact that we would all be drawn into the battle against COVID 19 but he also warned us about another battle, one of information. As this disease has played out over weeks of isolation, quarantines and business shutdowns. We've also seen a rise extreme rhetoric from all sides of this disease, the information war. To borrow a term from the extremely controversial Alex Jones has become increasingly heated and some might say even dangerous. That war is being fought on the numerous social media platforms where we share not only snapshots of our lives. But our opinions and beliefs

Desmon Farris ([02:35](#)):

on this episode of military matters? We're taking a look at the age old strategy of disinformation, a practice with roots dating as far back as the earliest conflicts. We all want to believe that we won't be fooled by a dishonest social media post and that we'll know the truth when we see or hear it, but will we? No matter what side of the fence you find yourself on left or right, you're probably looking at your Facebook or Twitter feed and wondering why would he or she say that they're so wrong. They're crazy to believe that, and some of you might even be thinking that what your Facebook friends are saying is downright treasonous.

Rod Rodriguez ([03:19](#)):

I'm rod Rodriguez.

Desmon Farris ([03:21](#)):

I'm Desmon Farris.

Rod Rodriguez ([03:22](#)):

This is military matters like you, Desmon and I have Facebook friends. Some of my friends have pretty out there beliefs out there. To me that is no, I don't have much faith in crystals or astrology, but some of them do. Some are not quite anti-vaxxers, but they're not afraid of encouraging you to quote look into it and make up your own mind. Over the last several weeks, several of my Facebook friends have called into question many aspects of the COVID 19 crisis from who's really at risk, whether masks are necessary and recently suggesting that there could be a connection between the virus bill Gates and five G. The wireless communication technology.

Rod Rodriguez ([04:05](#)):

From my perspective, my friends are rational, educated and I relate to many of them, but as the COVID crisis unfolded, I began to feel uncomfortable reading many of their posts. They felt aggressive, angry and threatened. Their posts didn't seem like they were coming from the same rational people that I knew. I began to respond and share articles that reinforced my perspective and my beliefs and in turn I was also getting pretty angry in my post. Then not too long ago, several of those people began to post screenshots of a message that their post had been removed by Facebook for having COVID disinformation. Then more screenshots came from Twitter and YouTube. Everyone was angry at the censorship and many thought that this censorship was an affirmation that they were asking the right questions, that maybe they were onto something.

Desmon Farris ([04:56](#)):

Social media companies have taken it upon themselves to take down posts and videos that they feel spread misinformation about COVID 19 Facebook even provides a redirect message taking the viewer to the world health organization's website. Every platform is different, but they all seem to agree that they have a responsibility to the public to discourage content promoting content that disputes the existence or transmission of COVID 19 as described by the world health organization and local health authorities content that discourages someone from seeking medical treatment or promotes medically unsubstantiated methods to prevent serious illness in place of seeking medical treatment content that explicitly disputes the efficiency of the world health organization. Local health authority recommended guidance on social distancing and self isolation that may lead people to act against that guidance. Claims that the Corona virus does not exist and content that includes medically diagnostic advice. For COVID 19.

Rod Rodriguez ([06:01](#)):

we were curious not only about the standard these companies were using, but also how they were determining which posts stayed and which were removed. Unfortunately, not one of the social media platforms we reached out to would grant us an interview. We were instead redirected their policy guidelines.

Rand Waltzman ([06:19](#)):

Yeah, you can see some of the effects of what they do. You may see a page that has been taken down like you don't know what they actually do internally.

Rod Rodriguez ([06:26](#)):

That's dr Rand Waltzman

Rand Waltzman ([06:28](#)):

and I'm currently the deputy chief technology officer of the RAND corporation. I am not here representing the Rand corporation in any way, shape, or form. Everything I say are purely my own opinions, but nothing to do with the organization.

Rod Rodriguez ([06:39](#)):

Dr Waltman is a computer scientist and expert in artificial intelligence and he's been writing about disinformation for several years, so let's begin with what exactly is the difference between misinformation and disinformation?

Rand Waltzman ([06:51](#)):

The bad intent really. So disinformation is somebody is intentionally trying to deceive you. They know what they're saying isn't true or misleading, but it's intentionally really trying to get at you misinformation. It's less intentional. So people are passing along things disinformation named might have been exposed to and they believe it and they're passing it along like it's a fact. So they're not intending to deceive anybody. So that's, I mean that's sort of the primary difference I would say.

Desmon Farris ([07:16](#)):

So disinformation is the intentional piece. Someone wants you to believe what they want you to believe. When you spread that belief because you think it's true. That's misinformation.

Rod Rodriguez ([07:28](#)):

Now what about those social media platforms? Their guidelines state, they're trying to prevent misinformation from spreading and the offer some ambiguous examples. So it kind of feels like they're hiding something. Now that's not Des and I trying to create some conspiracy here we have zero proof of conspiracy. It just feels like no one wants to talk about the process by which misinformation is being characterized.

Rand Waltzman ([07:51](#)):

They'll tell you, well trust us, we say we're doing this, that and the other one. But you have no way to verify that and until you can verify that, then to me it to them is they're just all talk. I don't believe anything they say, why should I?

Rod Rodriguez ([08:29](#)):

Well, what if you thought of information as a commodity? It's value drive, not from truthfulness and accuracy, but by palatability essentially. The more believable the information is, the more valuable it becomes. A moment ago I said we had no proof of a conspiracy and we still don't, but it felt like there was that feeling is what makes social media information valuable. That's what sells in the world of disinformation. As long as the message makes me feel a certain way, that could be enough for me to go from. It feels like they're hiding something too. They're definitely hiding something.

Rand Waltzman ([09:04](#)):

So to tell somebody, well, you know, in the last two weeks we've learned so much more about this that we realized that. Then we said before it wasn't right, but based on what we learned now we've changed it. Well. Most people don't relate to that very well. But if you dramatize the whole thing and you

dramatize the process, people will relate to that. And if you present it in those terms, people will relate to that better. Think about the guys who is spreading disinformation. They changing the stories every other day. does that matter? No. Why does it work? Because they're using emotional manipulation to get their point across. It's not that their message is so sexy necessarily, but they're making it sexy and making it exciting. They're making it interesting.

Rod Rodriguez ([09:39](#)):

But dr Waltman invites us to consider that perhaps it's not so much the work of foreign provocateurs hovering over keyboards, tirelessly creating fake news. Instead, dr Waltman points to an industry much closer to home, one that understands what Americans like, love and hate.

Rand Waltzman ([09:58](#)):

So at this point, I mean, I would almost say that our domestic operators are maybe even more of a threat than foreign ones. And in fact the foreign ones are hiring these guys, right? It's well documented that certain public relations firms, I won't name names, but uh, so one example had done, uh, you know, like a hundred million dollars, well documented, \$50 million worth of business for the Russians \$50 million, you hear about a hundred thousand dollars the Russians might have spent on Facebook as well. That's not so interesting. It's a \$50 million that they spent with these public relations firms and in fact it's estimated that they spent on the order of a hundred million dollars in total.

Rand Waltzman ([10:34](#)):

on public relations firms. and, if you look at these firms, their customers are like the 50 worst human rights violators in the entire world are their customers as well as us congressmen as well as corporations, as well as basically everybody. So these are hired guns and everybody uses them. So where is the motivation to clean it up? There isn't any, nobody's motivated to clean it up.

Rod Rodriguez ([10:56](#)):

Let's go back to social media platforms and COVID 19 posts. Some not all, but some posts are being brought down and viewers redirected to sites the platform deems credible. They're kind of cagey about the details of the take down process and now we're being asked to consider that mad men style ad agencies are working on messaging campaigns from foreign and domestic actors trying to convince you the truth. They were hired to promote. So do those social media platforms have a role to play in these multimillion dollar information campaigns? Are they suppressing one message and promoting another? How can we know the truth about covert 19 or any major social health or political issue when there are so many messages flying around the social media spheres and some are tagged as misinformation, perhaps stemming from a disinformation campaign. It's enough to draw you into thinking there are connections plots that maybe this whole thing is a Charlie Kelly connection chart, but maybe it isn't.

Desmon Farris ([11:53](#)):

Facebook doesn't owe us any answers. It would be nice though, but they don't have to do it. They're pointing links towards the WHO and the CDC. So we can gauge what their standards are. And regardless of whether you agree with those organizations or not, you kind of know what might get flagged even if not all things are flagged, which leads us to the process. Automated, human, a mix. There are questions there for sure and perhaps the inconsistency and what gets taken down and what stays up has less to do with the money influence and more about just the sheer amount of data one has to sift through to find those policy violations. As for those ad agencies, well, if you've ever made a choice between two types

of spaghetti sauces based on the fact that one label looked better than the other, then you felt their power and grip on your purchasing options. So of course if an organization or person wants to convince you of something, they'll spend millions of dollars on the folks that know how to sway your opinion. But is that wrong or immoral? Perhaps the message is,

Rod Rodriguez ([13:03](#)):

so how do we sort through what's real and what's not? Why are your friends on Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube saying things that run so contradictory to what you might believe or even what is being considered by the CDC and the WHO as fact. Are they falling into a disinformation trap or did you fall into the disinformation trap? Who really took the red pill? After the break we talked to an expert who knows a little something about beliefs, disinformation and what exactly is a healthy dose of skepticism and later in the world of information warfare, stars and stripes might be the captain America we need unless he's put back on ice. All that after the break.

Desmon Farris ([13:43](#)):

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Rod Rodriguez ([14:10](#)):

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Desmon Farris ([14:15](#)):

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Rod Rodriguez ([14:21](#)):

when your orders come in and it's time to make a plan to move or store your personally owned vehicle. International auto logistics is here as the number one resource for us service members. P O V needs. Just use their website to get started at [www dot PCs](http://www.dotPCs.com), [my pov.com](http://my.pov.com) to get all of the information you'll need on storing and picking up your vehicle or check out the just launched I a L mobile app. Just search for PCs, my POV in the Apple store or on Google play.

Michael Shermer ([14:54](#)):

I think the, the process of conspiratorial thinking and disinformation is accelerated with the coven 19 because of the worldwide nature of it. The fact that it's 24 seven on the news cycle and not just on the internet, but you know all the major news outlets, that's all they cover.

Rod Rodriguez ([15:12](#)):

That's Dr. Michael Shermer. He's the author of several books about belief, including his newest book giving the devil his due. He's also the founder of skeptic magazine.

Michael Shermer ([15:21](#)):

And the fact that it is a threat, it's potentially very dangerous and we all have to respond through this social isolation, which is disrupting people's lives. And of course the economic meltdown that happened so fast and clearly we know why. I think that's kind of all added up to a perfect storm of conspiracism in very predictable ways that the major targets of conspiracy theories are, you know, big pharma, big government, big corporations, big rich individuals. So you know, Bill Gates, pharmaceutical companies, you know, the anti-vaxxers and, and that tells us something that it's, it's not, uh, a thought out targeted claim that's being examined through the methods of science and critical thinking and rational skepticism. Instead, it's sort of being tagged as signaling your tribal commitment and who you just generally always fear or are concerned about.

Rod Rodriguez ([16:21](#)):

We generally surround ourselves with likeminded people. That doesn't mean we're building our own custom echo chamber necessarily, but let's be honest with ourselves, we all tend to lean toward tribal tendencies. It's exactly why we have political parties, groups and clubs. What's interesting about Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, and Instagram, is that acquaintances can often make their way into our social media stream. Acquaintances, we may not fully understand their beliefs or what tribes they associate with. So when they share something and it shows up in your stream, it can be pretty drawing. And then there are folks who are your friends with whom you share a lot in common with except for some hot button ideas and beliefs. So tribalism and messaging have a way of finding each other. Dr Sherrmer also pointed out another factor in conspiracy theory, uncertainty. COVID 19 is new. In fact it was called novel coronavirus literally meaning new Coronavirus. So with anything new, there are assumptions that are made initially and then found later through more research to not be true. What scientists consider a natural progression of research can be reframed into incompetence. And even malintent

Michael Shermer ([17:31](#)):

first it looked like, Oh, it's just old people and people with preconditions. But clearly that's no longer the case. So in what even were, whereas more scientifically conservative people, I don't mean politically conservative, but scientifically conservative people would trust someone like Fauci. And I do. But you know, Fauci is not omniscient. You know, he's not God. And if Fauci doesn't know, nobody knows. And so that opens the door up for anybody and their brother to, you know, to, to go get on YouTube. And if they're wearing a lab coat or, or, or a doctor's outfit, surgeon's outfit or something, you know, it makes it all the more tempting to think that they might be onto something because well, if Fauci doesn't know and you know, and Trump doesn't know, or the CDC doesn't know, then maybe this guy's got the answer. And you know, so what's the harm of listening to this guy? And the answer is there's not just one. This guy, they, in other words, not just the CDC and then this other alternative person that has this other hypothesis we should consider, there's now dozens or hundreds of alternative ideas. And so there, there's some potential harm in, in not following expertise.

Desmon Farris ([18:38](#)):

There are critics of the CDC and the WHO that point to information, their information that discredits the CDC and the who helped advise, research and researchers with so many different perspectives. Why shouldn't we be looking at both sides of the covert issues? What's the harm in exploring alternative ideas and perspectives?

Michael Shermer ([19:01](#)):

Well, in some areas of human life, the both sides argument is good. Like in say, divorce mediation or criminal trials, you know, we have an adversarial system for a very good reason because we know about human biases including the biases of judges and jury. So you know, you really, you really want an attorney who is not after the truth fact, the attorney's job is not to figure out what happened or what his client really did. His job is to win and there's good reasons for that, but that's not how science works. Uh, you know, science just wants to know what's the truth. Now, sometimes it's hard to say, so having something like an adversarial system where you have competition between scientists in a particular field who are equally knowledgeable, uh, compete with each other, debate, disputation, open peer commentary, peer review, you know, conferences where, where they go at each other, that's all good.

Michael Shermer ([19:53](#)):

Particularly in the early steps of the science when we're not sure what's going on and so on. But at some point, usually there's the, there emerges consensus. So you'll hear this word that, you know, the consensus that climate, consensus foods that in this case, you know, global warming is real and human caused. Okay. But it's not like this is a democracy where we're all voting to see, you know, what's the most popular position? And that's the truth. That's not what I mean by that. In science, what you don't see behind closed doors is all the competitiveness and argumentation and so on and competing hypotheses that went on for decades before the consensus arose. So when you hear somebody say, well, there's two, two sides, well there may be six or 10 sides or there may be just one side is on which scientific claim we're talking about and where it is and its development and so forth. So, um, and that's true of All fields,

Desmon Farris ([20:48](#)):

one of the most critical components to a good dis information campaign is the injection of truth. In order to make a message palatable, it's not enough to have someone feel a certain way. The message has to pass an individual's initial scrutiny,

Rod Rodriguez ([21:04](#)):

their BS meter.

Desmon Farris ([21:05](#)):

So to do that, a dis information message has to be wrapped around some kernel of truth. That truth becomes the linchpin for the whole message. Something to point to and say, see you can verify that. And credibility is one. Once the dis information is wrapped in that kernel of truth, the misinformation chain begins.

Michael Shermer ([21:29](#)):

You know, the stuff that came out in the nineties after the church committee into the Kennedy assassination and all this stuff that came out about what was going on, you know, with the operation Northwoods, which was this idea of, you know, setting up a false flag operation as an excuse to invade Cuba or assassinate Castro. I mean Kennedy rejected most of these crazy ideas. So when you see someone like Alex Jones ranting about, Sandy hook is a false flag operation. It's like that. That is just, that is just evil. But it's not completely crazy cause you know, false flag operations do happen. Most of the claims of them are not true, but in other words, it pays to be constructively conspiracist in as much as there are dangerous things that are out there, there are people conspiring to do things all the time. I mean, on a small scale.

Michael Shermer ([22:14](#)):

And here's one difference between distinguishing between true and false conspiracy theories is how big the conspiracy theory is. You know, if you're talking about, you know, world domination, it's probably not true. You know, or you know, our son, you know, taking over the country or you know, the entire economy or starting a war, you know, these things are very unlikely. But like again, with the Volkswagen example, you know, we do know corporations cut corners and try to cheat to gain it, slight advantage their competitors. We do know that, you know, people in wall street do some insider trading and pretty much every few months somebody gets busted for insider trading. Yeah. That just, why? Because they want money. That's why, you know, in other words, a very specific and narrowly focused, uh, thing. And so those things are true. So now when you know, once you scale up, say take Covid 19 and the uncertainties about it and you start becoming skeptical of this little claim here that claim that it really just people that are in their seventies or older and so I'm skeptical of that, you know, and but, but pretty soon if you go down the rabbit hole, you know, you think bill Gates is you know, conspired the whole thing or big pharma or five G. So there are, we should be skeptical of the conspiracy theories. The bigger they are, the more people that have to be involved. You know, the, you know, the, the scope of the conspiracy, then less likely it is to be true

Rod Rodriguez ([23:32](#)):

when we come back from the break. How do we protect ourselves from conspiracy theories, disinformation and misinformation. And where does stars and stripes fit into the news? and information war when we return,

Rod Rodriguez ([23:46](#)):

when your orders come in and it's time to make a plan to move or store your personally owned vehicle. International auto logistics is here as the number one resource for us. Service members. P O V needs, just use their website to get started at [www dot PCs](http://www.dotPCs.com), my pov.com to get all of the information you'll need on storing and picking up your vehicle or check out the just launched I a L mobile app. Just search for PCs, my POV in the Apple store or on Google play

Bob Reid ([24:19](#)):

in a way. Now the reader is King because advertising dollars have fled away from print. They're not there anymore. Any news organization that has advertising as its primary economic foundation is in very serious trouble.

Rod Rodriguez ([24:36](#)):

Digital news has shifted greatly from print and no one knows this better than the senior managing editor of stars and stripes. Robert Reed, you prefer to go by Bob.

Bob Reid ([24:45](#)):

Now the talk in the industry is, it's the, it's the subscription rates that are the future, you know, and uh, some of the big papers have subscription figures in the millions that's far more than they had when they were, uh, exclusively a print paper. The result of that is that it's just not enough money out there anymore and news organizations have had to cut back on staff. They've had to cut back on editing. They've had to cut back on research and all this, I think has lowered the quality of the journalism across the board and it's allowed the difference between the so-called credible organization and the, you know

that the kid in his basement turning out nonsense, but skillfully the difference isn't as great as it used to be, and that confuses readers,

Rod Rodriguez ([25:34](#)):

media and money. We hate that these two things go together, but they just do subscriptions or a huge source of income, which means the reader, viewer, listener, they have to be appeased or with so much competition out there. The customers will simply get up and find the content they like, not necessarily what's true.

Desmon Farris ([25:52](#)):

Remember we talked about the importance of feelings when it comes to social media or just media in general, people generally want to feel good about what they read. They want to feel like they're right, that others feel the same way, that they're in the right tribe. Unfortunately, lots of media understand this and they forego the research and editorial process that helps a story maintain its integrity. This environment makes it a lot easier for folks that can write well, to tell the truth, to create content that looks and feels like news but isn't.

Bob Reid ([26:30](#)):

And the theoretical kid in the basement turning out disinformation, you know, in Toledo pretending to be somebody else or something else doesn't really care if anybody realizes that the information is wrong as long as they don't realize it too, too soon. If you can get that story out there and you can get it shared widely and you can get a lot of clicks. So what if, uh, in two weeks it's been roundly criticized and proven beyond a shadow of a doubt story's wrong. It doesn't matter to you whether it's right or wrong. But a news organization that purports to be, you know, concerned with accuracy, be it Washington post or Fox or why or the New York times or the wall street journal or stars and stripes has to fact render, you know, we, we can tolerate or we can live with a certain number of mistakes, but when we see them all the time, that's not going to fly.

Rod Rodriguez ([27:27](#)):

So understanding what disinformation is, how we all play a role in misinformation, and that there's potentially big money behind the messaging we see trying to push someone else's agenda on us. How in the world can we safeguard ourselves from being manipulated by fake news, Dr. Michael Shermer

Michael Shermer ([27:44](#)):

The whole point of all the methods that's sciences over the centuries is to try to reduce the uncertainty or structure some kind of probabilistic estimates of a claim being true or false. True or false with a small T in a small F, there's no, you know, there's no proof in science. There's no, uh, you know, there's no truth with a capital T. So we're always left with a certain levels of uncertainty. So one skeptical principle is to start with the null hypothesis. That is, the claim is not true until the why's and the burden of proof is on the person making the claim, not on the skeptic, not on the scientist. So if you say, look, I got a cure for COVID 19. Okay. Uh, our initial response, it should be, I doubt it. Now go ahead and try to change my mind. And I hope you're right. I hope you're the one that got it. Cause this was a world changer and that would be great. But um, you know, there's 25 of you lined up, you know, behind you ready to make the same claim. They can't all be true. In fact, most of them probably or all of them are not true. So my position should be, um, now go ahead, take your best shot. And that's how science works across the

board in all fields. And so again, the burden of proof is on the person making the claim, not on the scientist to prove that it's not true cause you can't prove a negative.

Rod Rodriguez ([29:01](#)):

It goes a little further than if it's too good to be true. It isn't. Especially when we're talking about covid 19, the changes in what we thought were true are inevitable. That what we were told yesterday could change today. But that doesn't make the person who said it wrong. It makes that person a human being trying to understand a very complex problem set. There are different fields of science and technology and some are better known with concrete principles. We can rely on, but, when it comes to new viruses or anything new, really in science, it takes a lot of time for research to catch up with the recommendations.

Desmon Farris ([29:32](#)):

But what made Covin 19 at target for disinformation? Was it the speed with which people wanted answers? If we wait too long, thousands maybe of people would get sick and the public would be left wondering why wasn't anything done soon enough, move too quickly and you lose credibility when you have to go back and make changes to policy because now you look like you're wrong. That instability is the perfect environment for disinformation regardless of who's behind it. But perhaps it's not enough to just have a critical mindset or to even try to teach critical thinking. Dr Waltzman,

Rand Waltzman ([30:10](#)):

how long have we been teaching arithmetic in schools? I mean a long time, right? And how many people can do fractions and not that many, and now you're asking people to do something even more complicated than fractions. That's going to take even more time, which actually they're going to have to be spending time doing on a daily basis. I mean, this is not reality. It's just not reality. I mean, media literacy training and it's critical thing is good for a few people, but that will never scale, so it's, I mean it's not okay. I mean it's nice for a few people, but it's never going to come even close to solving the problem at the end of the day. I'm sorry to say that the only solution that really works effectively is to get the message out the same way the other. Dot. Guys do basically through emotional manipulation.

Rand Waltzman ([30:54](#)):

At the end of the day, effective messaging comes down to emotional manipulation, whether it's, whether it's true information or false information or anything in between. For most people it comes down to that. It's an emotional response and if you want to, if you want to manipulate somebody, you're going to do it based on emotional responses. If you want to tell somebody the truth about something as you see it, you're still, you're still, if you're going to be effective, you're still based on emotional responses. Why, for example, are our movies so effective? At messaging people because are they're based on emotions? It's entertainment, it's sucking you in, you're emotionally involved in it. That's the key. That's the source of the effectiveness. It isn't the quality of the message, right? It's the quality of their ability to manipulate your emotions and that I'm afraid at the end of the day is what it takes

Rod Rodriguez ([31:45](#)):

to me. That sounds pretty grim that we need to feel a certain way about the truth in order to accept it, but that doesn't mean he's wrong, but I'm not quite ready to give up an organization standing their ground against disinformation. You've probably heard that stars and stripes is facing deep spending cuts

in the new DOD budget is essentially being gutted financially. This podcast is part of their deeper move into digital and audio space where folks like you and I get our news from. Max Brooks:

Max Brooks ([32:12](#)):

in an age of gray zone warfare, hybrid warfare, information warfare, stars and stripes is one of the most important weapons we have in our arsenal. We need to fight misinformation propagated from our enemies and our enemies are a decade ahead of us. Losing stars and stripes would be like losing NORAD. On the Eve of the Cuban missile crisis,

Rod Rodriguez ([32:42](#)):

Ernie Gates as the stars and stripes ombudsman and back in March he wrote an article titled, don't let the Pentagon silence stars and stripes. Now in that article he wrote, quote, "it's not a market, it's a mission, and what's the purpose of that mission to provide the credible news, the troops, dependents and DOD civilians overseas deserve so they can better exercise their own rights as they serve democracy far from home. Some say the mission is obsolete, that there's plenty of news available from other sources today, especially online, but internet access is poor or restricted on many posts, especially away from work areas and troops are sometimes not allowed to bring their own mobile devices. Just as important. Most of Stripe's reporting is unique content, not covered by other news organizations. Where others focus on big picture geopolitics. Stripes. Reporters are on bases and in the field. Sometimes that's a local news, both good works and bad behavior or DODEA sports and academics, which would go uncovered. Otherwise it's about troops in harm's way."

Rod Rodriguez ([33:52](#)):

Stars and stripes isn't perfect, but like dr Schermer said, no one and nothing is, they're not as big as the New York times or the Washington post, not even close. But as the world of information warfare comes through the doorstep of every American, every soldier, every veteran, we need a news source that we can depend on, one that can be held accountable, that has people like an ombudsman and an oversight committee to ensure that the news it reports is as fair and accurate as possible, that it's not rushing to beat a headline and that it's not competing for clicks. Stars and stripes has been there for soldiers, sailors, airmen, and Marines and it wants to continue its service. Now more than ever on the front lines with you on the battlefield of information,

Desmon Farris ([34:36](#)):

even those stars and stripes operates from within the department of defense. It's editorially separated and its first amendment freedoms protected by Congress, which means they not only have an obligation, but they're protected to speak it.

Rod Rodriguez ([34:52](#)):

That's what makes them different from the rest of the media that's out there. People like Bob Reid who himself served in the military and today is fighting to keep the same newspaper he read while in uniform alive and well for the next generation of service members. We'll leave you with an email I received from dr Waltzman shortly after our interview he said quote, "the DOD should consider stars and stripes a critical element of force protection. This is the realm of force protection and the information environment where our troops, every single one of them is under constant attack regardless of the state of kinetic operations anywhere in the world, any serious person in the DOD management to realize that

the information environment is developing into one of the most important battle spaces of all and right now the force protection there is, I am sorry to say is barely minimal"

Rod Rodriguez ([35:45](#)):

folks that does it for season one of military matters. Tell us what you thought on Twitter at stripes M M pod that's at stripes M and pod on Twitter or you can shoot us an email. Our address is podcast@stripes.com that's [podcast singular@stripes.com](mailto:podcast_singular@stripes.com).

Desmon Farris ([36:02](#)):

and if you like what you heard, leave us a review on Apple podcast. Those reviews mean a lot to getting the word out. That stripes has a podcast, so spread the word.

Rod Rodriguez ([36:11](#)):

I'm rod Rodriguez.

Desmon Farris ([36:12](#)):

I'm Desmon Farris.

Rod Rodriguez ([36:14](#)):

This was military matters. Season one. We'll be back in three weeks with season two until then, stay healthy, stay safe, and we'll see you at the next episode.