

U.S. Movies and T.V. Shows Have U.S. Army Ratings

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Theme: [Media Disinformation](#)

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[Let's Try Democracy](#)

The U.S. Army and Air Force public relations offices have responded to a Freedom of Information Act [request](#) by releasing huge lists of movies and television shows that they have assessed and, at least in many cases, sought to influence. Here's the Army's [PDF](#). Here's the Air Force's [PDF](#).

The shows and films, foreign and U.S. made, aimed at foreign and U.S. audiences, including documentaries and dramas and talk shows and "reality" TV, cross every genre from those obviously related to war to those with little discernable connection to it.

Films show up in theaters without any notice that they have been influenced by the Army or Air Force or other branch of the military. And they carry ratings like G, PG, PG-13, or R. But the Army's until-now-secret assessments of films also give them ratings. Every rating is positive and cryptic. They include:

- Supports Building Resiliency,
- Supports Restoring Balance,
- Supports Maintaining our Combat Edge,
- Supports Adapting Our Institutions,
- Supports Modernizing Our Force.

Some films have multiple ratings. Truth in advertising, I think, would include these ratings on previews and advertisements for films. I'd like to know what the Army thinks of a film. It would make my decision to avoid it much easier. Go ahead and scroll through the Army document linked above, and chances are you'll find out what a movie you're currently interested in or recently saw is rated by the folks who brought you Iraq, Libya, Afghanistan, Yemen, Pakistan, Somalia, ISIS, Al Qaeda, and top ratings worldwide for the U.S. as the nation considered the greatest threat to peace on earth (Gallup, December 2013).

Here's a comment from Zaid Jilani at [Salon](#): "The sheer scale of the Army and the Air Force's involvement in TV shows, particularly reality TV shows, is the most remarkable thing about these files. 'American Idol,' 'The X-Factor,' 'Masterchef,' 'Cupcake Wars,' numerous Oprah Winfrey shows, 'Ice Road Truckers,' 'Battlefield Priests,' 'America's Got Talent,' 'Hawaii Five-O,' lots of BBC, History Channel and National Geographic documentaries, 'War Dogs,' 'Big Kitchens' — the list is almost endless. Alongside these shows are blockbuster movies like *Godzilla*, *Transformers*, *Aloha* and *Superman: Man of Steel*."

That list is a sampling, nothing more. The full list goes on and on and on. It includes many films about wars or U.S. base construction. There's an *Extreme Makeover Home Edition* at Fort Hood. There's *The Price Is Right's Military Appreciation Episode*. There's a C-Span show called "The Price of Peace" — C-Span is of course often thought of as a neutral fly on the

wall. There are, as mentioned above, lots of BBC documentaries — the BBC is of course often thought of as *British*.

The documents linked above consist mostly of assessments with relatively little explicit discussion of military influence. But further research has produced that. The *Mirror* [reports](#) on the censoring of an Iron Man movie because the military is — not kidding — actually trying to create Iron Man type suits of armor/weaponry: “Directors are being forced to re-write scripts by the United States Department of Defense if the content is deemed inappropriate — and the big screen hits affected include [Iron Man](#), *Terminator Salvation*, *Transformers*, *King Kong* and *Superman: Man of Steel*. . . . Last year, [President Barack Obama](#) appeared to be joking when he said the U.S. military was working on its own Iron Man suit for troops. But the first prototypes of a super-strong exoskeleton being developed for chiefs by universities and technology players were delivered last June.”

Shouldn't viewers of fantasy cartoonish movies know that the Army has been involved and what it rates those films in terms of their recruitment value?

“To keep Pentagon chiefs happy,” reports the *Mirror*, “some Hollywood producers have also turned villains into heroes, cut central characters, changed politically sensitive settings — or added military rescue scenes to movies. Having altered scripts to accommodate Pentagon requests, many have in exchange gained inexpensive access to military locations, vehicles and gear they need to make their films.”

Guess who pays for that?

In fact many of the listings in the documents above originated as requests from film makers to the military. Here's an example:

“Comedy Central – OCPA-LA received a request from Comedy Central to have Jeff Ross, the Roastmaster General, spend 3 to 4 days on an Army post where he will embed himself amongst the Soldiers. This project will be a hybrid of a documentary and a stand up special/comedy roast. Ross, who has gone on several USO tours, wants to participate in various tactical drills and exercises, as well as interview soldiers and officers of all different ranks to get a fuller understanding of what a life in the military is really like, and how extraordinary those who choose to serve truly are. Then on his last day at the base, armed with the personal knowledge he has acquired, Jeff will put on a roast/standup comedy concert for all the people on the base that he has gotten to know during his tenure there. We are working with OCPA to see if this is something that can be supported and, if so, to find the best fit.”

These questions as to whether something can be supported are frequent, but in skimming the documents I notice no negative ratings like

- Supports Resistance to Mass-Murder
- Supports Peace, Diplomacy, or Intelligent Foreign Relations
- Supports Disarmament and Wise Use of Peace Dividend

Apparently all news is good news. Even cancellations get good ratings:

“‘BAMA BELLES’ REALITY TV SHOW (U), The Bama Belles, a reality show based

out of Dothan, AL is being cancelled. According to cast member and producer Amie Pollard, TLC will not continue with a second season of “Bama Belles” and is still deciding whether to air the third episode. One of the actors on the show was SGT 80th Training Command (USAR). Assessment: Cancellation of the show is in the best interest of the US Army. Supports Building Resiliency.”

Propaganda aimed at foreign audiences is included right alongside that aimed at potential recruits and voters in the United States:

“(FOUO) STATE DEPARTMENT DOCUMENTARY, AFGHANISTAN (FOUO) (SAPA-CRD), OCPA-LA contacted by production company contracted by U.S. State Dept. Filmmaker requesting to film short scene on FOB in Afghanistan and involving use of five soldiers. The short scene will ‘involve a female interrupter [sic] working for US forces and her family struggles.’ The soldiers will be mostly background and will only have a few lines. Filmmaker requesting to film the scene in the last two weeks of JAN. ISAF/RC-E has expressed willingness to support. OCPA-LA is coordinating with OSD(PA) for approval. ASSESSMENT: Viewership UNK; video product aimed at Afghan national audiences. Supports Adapting Our Institutions.”

Perhaps most disturbing are the advertisements for future war-making. There is, for example, a National Geographic series on “futuristic weapons.” There’s also this video game that seeks to depict a U.S. soldier in the year 2075:

“(FOUO) ACTIVISION/BLIZZARD VIDEO GAME (FOUO) (OCPA-LA), OCPA-LA was contacted by Activision/Blizzard, the largest video game publisher in the world. They are in the initial stages of a new project designed to create a realistic representation of a Soldier in 2075. They are interested in discussing the U.S. Army of the future; equipment, units, tactics, etc. Have scheduled an introductory meeting this week to discuss. While their interests will require an outside paid consultant, our interest is to correctly establish and frame the Army brand within the game while still in development. Update: and met with company president and game developers. Expressed concern that scenario being considered involves future war with China. Game developers looking at other possible conflicts to design the game around, however, developers are seeking a military power with substantial capabilities. ASSESSMENT: Anticipate game release will be very high-profile and comparable to recent ‘Call of Duty’ and ‘Medal of Honor’ releases. Will likely sell in the range of 20-30 million copies. Supports Adapting our Institutions and Maintaining Our Combat Edge.”

The Joint Chiefs of Staff last month published the nonfiction “National Military Strategy of the United States of America — 2015,” which also struggled to identify a frightening enemy. It named four nations as the justification for massive U.S. military spending, while admitting that none of the four wanted war with the United States. So, after U.S. government consultation with Sony and its depiction of the fictional murder of the leader of North Korea, it’s nice to see some hesitation about depicting a 2075 US-China war. But what exactly is a “correct” depiction of the U.S. Army in 2075? Who has credibly suggested that Western “civilization” can survive war and nationalism that long? And where is Hollywood’s investment in depicting an alternative future with greater likelihood of actually being sustainable?

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