

## **Stars and Stripes Becomes First National News Organization to Adopt Core Journalism Values Promoted by CFINR**

Published: August 22, 2025

[Stars and Stripes](#), the independent news organization serving U.S. military personnel worldwide, has become the first national media outlet to formally adopt a statement of Core Values modeled in part on the framework promoted by the [Center for Integrity in News Reporting](#) (CFINR).

The newly adopted document, which was recently distributed to Stars and Stripes' global staff and leadership, affirms a commitment to impartiality, accuracy and transparency, and draws heavily from CFINR's recommended [Statement of Core Values](#), while incorporating language tailored to its unique mission and audience.

"Credibility is the greatest asset of any news medium, and impartiality is its greatest source of credibility," the Stars and Stripes statement begins. "Impartiality means reporting and editing the news honestly, fairly, and objectively without personal opinion or bias. Journalism's core mission is truth-telling, which requires accurately reporting facts and context."

CFINR Executive Director Rufus Friday praised the move as a milestone in the organization's nationwide effort to rebuild public trust in journalism through institutional transparency and principled editorial practices.

"This is a powerful statement that aligns perfectly with our mission of restoring trust through impartial, objective, and fair reporting," Friday said. "Stars and Stripes has taken a bold and necessary step, not only for the military community it serves, but for the broader journalism profession."

Friday, who also currently serves as chairman of the Stars and Stripes newspaper publisher national advisory board of directors, played a role in bringing the core values initiative to the publication's attention. Publisher Max Lederer Jr. acknowledged the importance of the board's support in crafting and finalizing the statement, which involved collaborative input from editorial leaders in Washington, D.C., Europe and the Pacific.

"My goal for Stars and Stripes is to be viewed as a credible source, and we achieve this by impartial truth-telling in all that we publish," Lederer wrote in a message announcing the adoption of the values. "The current environment in the U.S. reflects skepticism with the news. It is important that the military community understands what Stripes stands for and our perspective in executing our mission."

Founded during the Civil War and now operating under the Defense Media Activity, Stars and Stripes is partially funded by the Department of Defense, with those funds primarily used to print and distribute the newspaper to troops deployed across the globe, but the publication maintains

full editorial independence. It is distributed to U.S. military personnel on every continent, often in warzones and remote bases.

[In a published commentary](#), Stars and Stripes Ombudsman Jacqueline Smith highlighted how the values reflect the paper's longstanding commitment to editorial independence and credibility. "The Core Values must be prominent on Stripes' sites as a pledge to readers," she wrote. "These principles are not mere slogans. They are commitments that guide every aspect of our work."

The newly adopted values language is explicit in its distinctions between news and opinion, drawing a sharp line: "Stars and Stripes maintains a strict separation between news and opinion. We do not write opinion pieces. Instead, we publish a balanced selection of external viewpoints," the values state.

CFINR founder and chair Walter E. Hussman Jr., who first began advocating in 2019 for news organizations to adopt formalized statements of journalistic integrity, called Stars and Stripes' adoption an important moment.

"This is the first major news organization to adopt a statement of core values based on our model, and it is all the more meaningful coming from an institution as widely respected and globally distributed as Stars and Stripes," Hussman said. "Their approach, incorporating our language while making it their own, is exactly what we hope others will do. It sets a powerful precedent."

CFINR leaders say they hope this development will inspire similar commitments from other outlets, at a time when public trust of media institutions remains at historic lows. A [2024 Gallup poll](#) found that just 31-percent of Americans say they have a "great deal" or "fair amount" of trust in the mass media, the lowest level in decades.

"Journalism can't afford to ask for trust without earning it in return," Friday added. "When a national organization like Stars and Stripes commits in writing to impartiality, to transparency, and to accountability, it strengthens not just their newsroom, but the credibility of the entire field."