



Office of the Commissioner of Police

Cayman Islands Government

MEDIA RELATIONS POLICY

July 2024 - 2026

Compiled by:

OCP Media and Communications Unit

Office of the Commissioner of Police

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<p>Note: For compliance, this policy should be read in conjunction with the most recently amended versions of the:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cayman Islands Constitution Order • Information and Communications Technology Act • Police Act • The Penal Code • Data Protection Act • Freedom of Information Act • The Ombudsman Act 	

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1. INTRODUCTION

The Office of the Commissioner of Police (OCP), strives to provide clarity, transparency, structure and guidance on the interaction, and communication between its departments - the Royal Cayman Islands Police Service (RCIPS) and the Cayman Islands Coast Guard (CICG) - and local, regional, or international media organisations and journalists.

2. IMPLEMENTATION

This policy is effective from 19 July 2024 and is applicable to all local, regional, or international media organisations and journalists.

3. SCOPE

This policy outlines rules of engagement and procedures for interaction and communication between the OCP and media organisations, and journalists (hereafter referred to as "Media").

4. CLASSIFICATION OF 'MEDIA'

- 6.1. The term Media is defined in the policy to mean print, broadcast and online media used for communicating information to the public, including, but not limited to, newspapers, magazines, internet publishers, radio, and television broadcasters.
- 6.2. Media Organisation: An enterprise engaged in dissemination of information to the general public through traditional or online media forums.
- 6.3. Journalist: A person on assignment for a Media Organisation, as well as camera operators, television producers and press photographers that broadcast and disseminate information for public information.

5. KEY PRINCIPLES

Our key principles when engaging with the Media are to:

- 4.1. Develop a positive, proactive, two-way relationship with the Media.
- 4.2. Respond to all Media enquiries professionally, accurately and within a reasonable timeline, whilst upholding the integrity of the work of the OCP and prioritising the safety and security of staff, and those we serve, in our official responses.
- 4.3. Rebut false or inaccurate information in a timely manner.

6. POLICY STATEMENT & AIMS

- 5.1. This policy strives to minimise risks arising from Media matters and to mitigate against potential security or legal concerns for OCP.
- 5.2. Both OCP and the Media are expected to adhere to this policy's guidelines and procedures.
- 5.3. This policy aims to provide transparency, clarity, structure and guidance on:
 - 5.3.1. The OCP criteria and classification for Media to receive OCP information for awareness and distribution;

- 5.3.2. Guidelines for interaction, communication and relationship between OCP and the Media;
- 5.3.3. Outline clear consequences and remedies for not following guidelines;
- 5.3.4. Transparency on OCP media interactions, including how interactions will be determined, treated and managed through OCP Media & Communications Unit; and,
- 5.3.5. Clarification of Media queries and Freedom of Information (FOI) requests.

7. RULES FOR ENGAGEMENT

The guidelines for interaction and communication are set out below.

7.1. All OCP interactions with the Media whether local, regional, or international must be:

- 7.1.1. Ethical, professional, transparent, accountable, auditable, appropriate and justified in law at all times; and,
- 7.1.2. Conducted within a legal framework to ensure that the disclosure of information to the Media is lawful. Numerous Parliamentary Acts further prescribe what information can lawfully be disclosed publicly, including but not limited to the Data Protection Act, Freedom of Information Act, Coroners Act and Coroners Rules, as amended from time to time. RCIPS will, at all times, operate within this legal framework when interacting with Media.

7.2. All OCP interactions and communications with the Media are intended to:

- 7.2.1. Provide the public with an honest and transparent picture of policing and national security activity and demonstrate accountability;
- 7.2.2. Enhance the public's understanding of, support for, and active participation in policing and community safety;
- 7.2.3. Detect and reduce crime using the Media as a communications conduit;
- 7.2.4. Inform the public through the Media about local strategic priorities; and
- 7.2.5. Gain Media coverage of the RCIPS' services, activities and events, for the benefit of the public.

8. PROTOCOLS & EXPECTATION

8.1. Integrity of Information:

In accordance with this policy, **information provided by the OCP to the Media, that is then released to the public, must be accurate and reliable, with respect for the facts, while clearly differentiated from opinion or speculation.** Reporting by the Media should also be guided by the below scenarios.

8.2. Inaccuracies, Misrepresentation of Information, and Unethical Reporting:

Inaccuracies, misrepresentation and misuse of quotes, information and descriptions, and unethical reporting, can damage community harmony, police relations with various communities and hinder investigations, which often heavily depend on community support.

Coverage that is inaccurate, misrepresented, unethical or unbalanced should and will be challenged with the Media concerned, and where appropriate, corrections sought. This will be done via official correspondence by either the Commissioner of Police (or his/her designee) or the OCP Media & Communications Unit and not by individual officers or staff. In addition, the final outcome and OCP statement will be distributed to all Media and public for clarification where necessary.

Depending on the severity of the incident, or in the case of repeated incidents, a re-evaluation of the OCP's relationship with the media organization may be warranted, which may result in suspended or reduced access to media privileges such as; detailed responses to queries, interviews, invitations to press conferences etc.

NB: OCP deems unethical reporting as; not clearly distinguishing factual information from commentary or criticism, and inaccurate representation of subjects, which can result in endangering the life or safety of a person, damaging the reputation of innocent people, damaging the reputation of the OCP or its employees, violating someone's right to privacy or a fair trial, jeopardising police investigations or operations, or jeopardising court proceedings.

8.3. Quoted responses:

Where possible, the OCP will attribute quotes to relevant individuals involved in an investigation, or those with oversight of a Unit involved in an incident. **Where information is released to the Media on behalf of the OCP and an individual's name is not provided, the correct attribution is as follows:**

For OCP related matters, 'OCP Spokesperson' or 'OCP'

For RCIPS related matters, 'RCIPS Spokesperson', or 'Police' or 'RCIPS'.

For CICG related matters, 'CICG Spokesperson', or 'Coastguard' or 'CICG'

8.4. Major Incident:

For major accidents/ fatalities, murders, deaths or 'wanted for arrest' for serious crimes, it may be appropriate to ask the Media to temporarily refrain from reporting an incident, where, Media coverage may adversely affect an operation or investigation. On some occasions it may be necessary to delay the release of information to the Media to ensure that resources are in place to respond to public feedback. For example, an appeal for witnesses or information, where officers need to be available to respond, to arrest named suspects. In some cases, it may be appropriate for the OCP to issue a holding statement, while further facts are obtained. **The RCIPS commits to providing a response to the Media from a senior officer (this could be a quote, voice note or interview/ press conference) as soon as is feasibly possible, when a major incident occurs, bearing in mind that senior officers may be directly involved in, and prioritise, the immediate response to such an incident.**

8.5. Photos/Images:

Imagery will be released to the Media if there is a genuine policing purpose to be

achieved (eg: wanted person/missing person). As a rule, the RCIPS does not release imagery to the Media unless this basic tenet for investigation is met. From time to time the RCIPS may release images where there is public interest, such as firearms or drugs recovered, but this is at police discretion. **If a Media house chooses to publish a photo that was received on their own accord, we ask that they ensure this is done so ethically, with accuracy and without premature judgment of fault or guilt affecting either the investigation, victim, offender, or families involved.** Other types of imagery e.g.: stock photos, will be provided as and when available.

8.6. Release of Personal Information of Offenders or Victims of Crime/Incidents:

Under normal circumstances there will be no basis for disclosure of offender or victim personal information (beyond the basic information discussed in 8.7 below) to be distributed to the Media, unless there is a threat to the public or the individual and all other investigative actions have been exhausted without a favourable outcome. The identity of a deceased individual will often be delayed until deemed appropriate, and family members have been informed. Comments will not be made in response to Media enquiries on individual cases that may breach the individual's rights to confidentiality or the RCIPS ethical Code of Conduct even though the individual may already be named in the enquiry or reported by the Media.

In the case of a deceased individual, their cause of death (official or speculated), and other details beyond the general circumstances of their death, will not be provided to the media or the public by the police. Instead, this information may be borne out if the matter appears before the court. **Additionally, it should be noted that the Coroner's Office is the entity responsible for determining official causes of death following post-mortems, and the responsibility for, and ability to, release such information rests solely with that office, not the RCIPS/OCP.** For example, when police respond to a report of a sudden death, journalists should not expect confirmation of the cause of death from the police, as this is the Coroner's purview.

8.7. Person Description:

Words used to describe crime, victims, witnesses, suspects and offenders can be highly contentious, especially when they refer to ethnicity, sexual orientation, gender or racial origin. **OCP standard practice is to provide the gender, age and district of residence pertaining to persons who have been arrested in relation to an incident. If the person is a visitor or otherwise non-resident, the country of origin will be stated following a formal charge, or in the case of identifying a deceased person. For juveniles (persons under 18) the age will generally be omitted and they will be referred to as a juvenile.** The Media is being asked to report with care and without prejudice.

8.8. Designated Spokesperson:

The Chief Officer and Commissioner of Police is the official spokesperson for the RCIPS

and CIGG on issues such as strategy, policy, investigations and performance. The Commissioner may delegate to another officer to speak on behalf of the RCIPS and CIGG (for example, where the designated officer is the head of a department/unit or has professional expertise regarding the subject matter). If authorised to speak to the media, designated officers/spokespersons: must uphold and accurately speak on the policies and decisions of the OCP; must not disclose OCP information unless authorised to do so; and must seek guidance and information from Commissioner of Police/Media and Communications Unit where appropriate before providing comment to the media, to ensure they are up to date with relevant information and have considered reputational and other risks.

8.9. Employees:

All media requests received by an OCP employee must be referred to the Media and Communication Unit. Any media enquiry to any OCP employee who is not authorised to speak to the media or who is not authorised to speak on the subject matter should be redirected to the Media and Communication Unit. An employee should not divulge to any media, information, findings or determinations in relations to internal enquiries, reviews or investigations, irrespective as to whether ongoing or considered concluded, unless they have the approval of the Commissioner of Police or his/her designate. Employees as private citizens are entitled to make comments on civic affairs provided they do not give the impression they are speaking in an official position or on behalf of the OCP. Any media communication representing an employee's personal opinion as a private citizen, not associated with OCP, does not require approval. The Policy regards it as irresponsible to engage the media in any activity or comment that will: bring OCP into disrepute, undermine the integrity of investigations, or present a personal viewpoint as a position held by OCP.

8.10. Media & Independence:

The Media is not an extension of the OCP public relations activity. As an independent industry it has a vital role on behalf of the public to hold public bodies, including 'itself', to account. There will be times when the Media publishes or broadcasts information, articles and comments that may be critical of the RCIPS and CIGG and their performance. Such coverage should not taint our corporate relationship with the Media nor influence our approach and principles, as set out in this policy.

9. COMMUNICATION AND MANAGEMENT OF INFORMATION

9.1. Official Communication Mediums:

- 9.1.1. The OCP uses a range of different mechanisms for distribution of public information, including but not limited to: the RCIPS Website and Mobile App; social media platforms (X (Twitter), Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, LinkedIn); traditional Media (Print, Radio & TV); face to face (one to one or in person), panel interviews, broadcast/print interviews; and community meetings.
- 9.1.2. Different information can be released at various points in the process from investigation to arrest, to charging and appearance in court.

9.2. Official Media Interaction and Correspondence:

The OCP will engage in formal interaction with the Media at a variety of levels including, but not restricted to:

- Press Releases (i.e. official statement, information or announcement distributed to provide public information);
- Press Conferences / Briefings (i.e. discussion/briefing event in which Media are invited to listen and engage in open forum discussion, questions and answers);
- Interviews (i.e. discussion involving questions and answers with one or more Media);
- Official Quotes / Response (i.e. answer or reply to Media queries or address matters of public concern); or,
- Public Service Announcements (PSA) (i.e. advisory broadcast message for public attention and action).

9.3. The OCP will disseminate, either proactively or in response to queries or requests from the Media, a range of information including but not limited to:

- Strategic or tactical / operational activity (i.e. specific incidents and inquiries);
- Thematic issues (i.e. surveys, crime statistics);
- Organisational issues (e.g., restructuring of the service); or
- Accessibility issues (how the public can contact the RCIPS).

9.4. Media Management and Ways of Working:

9.4.1 All OCP Media interactions are managed by its Media and Communications Unit (MCU). **The Media and Communications Unit is the first point of contact for all Media enquiries**, although the Chief Officer and Commissioner of Police or his/her designee may lead on reactive Media enquiries.

9.4.2 Predominantly the MCU manages media relating to the RCIPS, but from time to time, will manage media and/or press releases for the CIG. CIG manages its own social media channels.

9.4.3 All official press releases, news and alerts are shared to Media partners, interested government agencies and colleagues from the official email address PR@rcips.ky with the corresponding website link from the RCIPS website for supporting information and release.

9.4.4 The RCIPS media distribution list is constantly growing and evolving. Requests from Media to be added to the list must be sent via email to PR@rcips.ky. Media organisations are responsible for requesting accreditation for journalists. The objective of the Media information access process is to register all Media in a fair and consistent way. Media organisations wishing to be added must meet the criteria in section 4 herein.

9.4.5 Press Releases are the primary tool used by the OCP for Media attention and distribution. Press releases are issued from the PR@rcips.ky email address by members of the Media and Communications Unit to provide information on incidents, events, achievements, plans, etc. All press releases are approved by the relevant member of the Senior Command Team (SCT). Releases are also distributed in-house to all OCP employees in order to keep them updated with events.

9.4.6 All press releases are updated and archived on the RCIPS website www.rcips.ky for

ALL public attention.

9.5. Media & Communications Unit (MCU) Overview & Duties

The MCU is open Monday – Friday from 8:00am – 5:00pm with on-call duties on weekdays (after 5pm) and on weekends (Saturday & Sunday) **for emergency and time-sensitive incidents of public concern**. An on-call media policy has been developed that defines the types of incidents that meet the threshold for reporting outside of business hours (see Appendix A). The MCU is staffed by both police officers and civilian communications specialists. The MCU provides the following services:

- 9.5.1. Produce Media enquiry responses or press releases as and when required;
- 9.5.2. Manages all active RCIPS social media channels (FB, IG, Twitter, and LinkedIn);
- 9.5.3. The MCU provides media engagement advice to all RCIPS employees, ranging from over-the-phone advice, and support at media interviews to attending major crime scenes and managing critical issues;
- 9.5.4. Research and provide feedback responses to media in consultation with appropriate members of staff;
- 9.5.5. Advise and assist (in conjunction with Joint Communications Service [JCS] where necessary) in the preparation and organisation of a press conference/launch etc. Generally, press conferences are only held for major events, or when a press release will not suffice, e.g. launching a major initiative, updating during a major incident, following the publication of the results of an inquiry, or explaining complex issues such as statistical reports (e.g. crime stats);
- 9.5.6. In the event of a national crisis and emergency, the MCU will work in conjunction with and take the lead from the CIG Department of Communications, Joint Communications Service (JCS) and other Government Agencies as part of a multi-agency response and communication strategy and action plan. The OCP may be required to help in coordinating, supplying or agreeing content; and,
- 9.5.7. Major incident response on behalf of a multi-agency call out to a situation or incident of significant Media interest, which may require careful investigatory management by the RCIPS (e.g. murder, motor vehicle accident and/or serious crimes against or affecting vulnerable members of the community).

9.6. Media Access to Crime Scene

- 9.6.1. Members of the Media may record Officers during the course of duty for the purpose of Media publication for public attention, **providing the Media remain out of the crime scene itself and obey all other laws**. However, it is important to note that in establishing a Crime Scene and Exclusion Rights pursuant to section 47 of the Police Act (2017 Revision), a Police Officer may establish a crime scene (at any location in the interest of public safety or for investigative purposes) on premises in any way that is reasonably appropriate in the circumstances.

- 9.6.2. Once a crime scene is created, an Officer must, if reasonably appropriate, give the public notice that the premises/location is a crime scene. Notice can be given by the use of crime scene tape or some other form of notice, such as Officers standing guard and verbally warning the public of the presence of the crime scene, its location and boundaries.
- 9.6.3. If it is safe to do so, the Officer will provide a line of sight to the incident, but the **Media are not allowed access into the cordon area. Breaching a police cordon is an offence according to section 49(3) of the Police Act (2021 Revision) and anyone who contravenes a police cordon commits an offence and is liable to a fine of \$3000 or imprisonment for one year or to both.**
- 9.6.4. If the Media are in a public place outside of the crime scene area, they have a general right to film the crime scene and the persons within it. If necessary, a screen may be established within the cordon to prevent filming of the crime scene to protect evidence, and the identity of witnesses, victims or suspects. Media in a public location can only be requested to move on if there are legitimate safety or operational reasons that provide a legal power to do so, e.g. if the investigation so far determines that there is a need to extend/widen the current crime scene.
- 9.6.5. Police employees working a crime scene are not authorised to respond to Media enquiries without the express authorisation of the Commissioner of Police or his/her authorised designee. **All Media on location must send all enquiries relating to the crime scene to the MCU.** It may be helpful to inform the on-call media officer from the MCU of your intentions to attend a crime scene so that your presence may be supported by the appropriate OCP personnel.

10. MEDIA IMPARTIALITY / EXCLUSIVES

- 10.1. All Media will be treated in a fair and equal manner by OCP staff. This means that information released by the OCP in the public domain will be available to all, and on request.
- 10.2. Where there is a great deal of Media interest in a case/incident/topic, it may be beneficial to release a PR to respond to all Media at once, host a media panel or invite Media on operations to ensure efficient use of staff time.
- 10.3. In the rare case Media are invited on operations, it would be in a manner which avoids favouritism and will consider the public. The decision may be taken to form a Media Rota Party with one camera, one reporter and one radio person. These will then have to be shared amongst all other Media. All Media attending Rota Party must sign a disclaimer (to be provided by MCU).
- 10.4. It is expected that where OCP staff are made available for interview or exclusives, whether they be pre-recorded or live, that **Media are willing to agree to topics for discussion prior to interview.**

11. FREEDOM OF INFORMATION

- 11.1. The OCP is committed to fulfilling its obligations under the Freedom of Information (FOI) Act in the spirit of openness, transparency and service to the public interest. The FOI Act provides the public with the right to information and records held by public authorities about their decisions, activities and services except an exempt record. The OCP responds to requests for information (FOI requests) through the RCIPS Information Manager. Public FOI requests may be submitted by email to the Information Manager at foi.pol@gov.ky.
- 11.2. The Ombudsman's Office has developed a list of Frequently Asked Questions to guide and advise those making FOI requests (visit our website www.rcips.ky for more details). Responses to certain FOI requests from Media Organisations are copied to the Media & Communications Unit so that context around the information to be disclosed can also be provided to the Media Organisation concerned.

12. DATA PROTECTION

- 12.1. The data we hold is processed and governed by the Data Protection Act (2021 Revision) which will only be released and made public with reference to this legal duty and responsibility. Further information on how the OCP processes personal data is available via our website <https://www.rcips.ky/privacy>

13. IMPLEMENTATION AND REVIEW

This policy will be implemented, upon approval, by the OCP Senior Leadership Team and will be evaluated bi-annually.

14. APPENDICES:

Appendix A: On-Call Procedures: OCP Information Release Outside Business Hours

Type of Information Released

Information will only be released outside normal business hours on **new incidents of serious public safety interest**. Although each incident presents its own circumstances and must therefore be taken on a case-by-case basis, in general the on-call media officer would release information on the following categories of incidents:

- Murders, Attempted Murders and Assaults with serious injuries, especially those involving the use of a firearm;
- Major firearm incidents with shots fired,
- Rapes or serious sexual assaults where the victim and assailants are not known to each other;
- Robberies of/at commercial premises, especially those involving a firearm;
- Fatal motor vehicle collisions;
- Major motor vehicle collisions where main roadways are closed;
- Sudden deaths that do not appear to be due to natural causes.

This is not an exhaustive list of the types of incidents that may require a release out-of- hours, however,

those that fall outside of this list would be exceptional cases. The media should limit its after-hours calls to incidents that appear to fall in one of the above categories. Obviously, it is difficult for members of the news media to know, based on limited information, whether an incident meets these criteria. At the same time, there are incidents that clearly don't qualify and we ask media colleagues just to do their best with the information they have.

It should also be noted that releases during weekday evenings will be even more restricted than those on the weekend, since the release on all but the most major incidents should be able to wait until the morning when the MCU begins work. Examples of the kinds of incidents that could merit a release or holding statement on a weekday evening would be a major traffic accident blocking roads, a major shooting incident, a major robbery, or any public safety incident requiring evacuations.

Improper Queries Out of Hours

The main distinction to be made between normal press queries and press queries to be made out-of-hours is two-fold:

1. The incident in question must be **new**, not an incident that the MCU has already responded to but on which the media wants more information;
2. The incident must be serious, and something affecting public safety, as opposed to just an incident of public interest. The arrest of a public figure, for instance, does not qualify for an out-of-hours release.

Since the MCU manages a broader range of press queries during the workday, and since the same staff members are managing on-call after-hours queries, there may be a temptation among colleagues in the media to pursue responses to outstanding press queries or interview requests after hours. Colleagues in the media must refrain from making phone calls or sending emails to the on-call media officer after hours regarding normal, daily press business. The availability of media officers after hours is not meant to extend the normal workday around the clock.

On-Call Etiquette

While members of the media should limit their queries after-hours to serious incidents of public safety interest, at the same time they should not feel restrained from calling when they genuinely believe such an incident has taken place. If members of the media strive to observe these guidelines, MCU staff on duty likewise agrees to be available and responsive, and mainly, to answer the phone or return missed calls and emails in a timely manner.

However, as a matter of courtesy, members of the media should avoid calling the media officer on duty after 9 p.m. on any evening unless a significant police incident is taking place.

Knowing who to contact

The MCU is made up of three staff who rotate after-hours on-call duties each week. Each week, the MCU will send an email to the media stating who the on-call media officer is for that week (Monday – Sunday), along with their contact preferences.

For reference, the MCU staff and contact details are as follows:

Chanel Ammon, Communications Manager

Chanel.Ammon@rcips.ky

936-8017 (mobile)

Sergeant Jodi-Ann Powery, Police Media Officer

Jodi-Ann.Powery@rcips.ky

916-3277 (mobile)

Mikhail Campbell, Media Relations Officer

Mikhail.Campbell@rcips.ky

916-3265 (mobile)

Concerns or Complaints

Concerns or complaints about OCP media management after hours should be directed to

chanel.ammon@rcips.ky

Appendix B: Sample Codes of Conduct

- International Federation of Journalists Global Charter of Ethics: <https://www.ifj.org/who/rules-and-policy/global-charter-of-ethics-for-journalists.html>
- National Union of Journalists Code of Conduct (United Kingdom): <https://www.nuj.org.uk/about/nuj-code/>
- Society of Professional Journalists (US): <https://www.spj.org/ethicscode.asp>
- Australian Broadcasting Corporation Principles and Standards: <http://www.mediawise.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2011/09/EditorialPOL2011.pdf>
- National Press Photographers' Association Code of Ethics : <https://nppa.org/code-ethics>
- BBC: <https://www.bbc.co.uk/editorialguidelines/guidelines>
- New York Times: <https://www.nytimes.com/editorial-standards/ethical-journalism.html#introductionAndPurpose>