

This is a verbatim transcription of the text of the State Department policy handout about on- and off-record understandings, with minor variations in typography:

Ground Rules for Interviewing State Department Officials

Ground Rules – Ground rules must be agreed upon at the beginning of a conversation or an interview with State Department officials. The discussion should proceed only after you and the officials are clear on exactly how the information can be used or attributed.

On the Record

Information may be quoted directly and attributed to the official by name and title.

On Background

The official's remarks may be quoted directly or paraphrased and are attributed to a "State Department official" or "Administration official" as determined by the official.

On Deep Background

The source cannot be quoted or identified in any manner, not even as "an unnamed source." The information is usually couched in such phrases as "it is understood that" or "it has been learned." The information may be used to help present the story or to gain a better understanding of the subject, but the knowledge is that of the reporter, not the source.

Off the Record

Nothing of what the journalist is told may be used in the story. The information is meant only for the education of the reporter.