

AIR FORCE DOCTRINE PUBLICATION 3-61

PUBLIC AFFAIRS



U.S. AIR FORCE

31 October 2024

Air Force Doctrine Publication 3-61, *Public Affairs*

TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION TO PUBLIC AFFAIRS.....	1
CHAPTER 2: PUBLIC AFFAIRS CORE COMPETENCIES	4
CHAPTER 3: PUBLIC AFFAIRS TENETS.....	7
CHAPTER 4: PUBLIC AFFAIRS ACTIVITIES	13
CHAPTER 5: PUBLIC AFFAIRS AND OPERATIONS IN THE INFORMATION ENVIRONMENT.....	18
CHAPTER 6: PLANNING, EXECUTION, AND ASSESSMENT	22
REFERENCES.....	27

FOREWORD

This document provides doctrine and practical guidance for commanders, public affairs officers, and staff. Public affairs (PA) is an operational information capability that affects friendly, neutral, and adversary perceptions and behavior through the planning and execution of public communication and engagement and the release of true, accurate, and timely information. PA is the Department of the Air Force's (DAF) primary public communication capability.¹

PA's four core competencies describe the primary value PA contributes to overall mission accomplishment. These synergistic competencies are core contributions of PA operations to the mission and are conducted across the competition continuum. PA capabilities are most effective when integrated into strategic, operational, and tactical plans, and executed with direct support from commanders at all levels to achieve desired effects.

The PA Tenets serve as guideposts for the effective use of the PA as part of a comprehensive military and government approach to achieving service, joint, and national strategies. Through these tenets, PA operations focus on synergistic activities to achieve the desired effects of its core competencies.

The information environment (IE) is defined as the aggregate of social, cultural, linguistic, psychological, technical, and physical factors that affect how humans and automated systems derive meaning from, act upon, and are impacted by information, including the individuals, organizations, and systems that collect, process, disseminate, or use information.

PA personnel should be attuned to the physical and cognitive aspects, particularly interpersonal communication, international public information, mass media, social media, and the internet. Through these channels, relevant actors can disseminate information that can directly affect the success or failure of military operations.

Properly planned, executed, and assessed PA efforts take a fundamental effects-based operations approach (EBO)² in terms of creating an "effect" by disseminating timely, truthful, and accurate information to achieve a particular objective. The success of PA is contingent upon the desired effects of PA operations being integrated throughout all phases of military operations and related to appropriate objectives.

¹ For additional information on DAF primary public communication, see Air Force Doctrine Publication (AFDP) 3-13, *Information in Air Force Operations*.

² See AFDP 3-0, *Operations and Planning*, for additional information.

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION TO PUBLIC AFFAIRS

Public affairs (PA) is an operational information capability that affects friendly, neutral, and adversary perceptions and behavior through the planning and execution of public communication and engagement and the release of true, accurate, and timely information. PA is the Department of the Air Force's (DAF) primary public communication capability.³

PA activities are defined as "communication activities with external and internal audiences".⁴ As a principal capability of the United States Air Force (USAF) Information Warfare, PA provides DAF and joint force commanders (JFC) with the means to leverage overt communication and engagement to affect the cognitive drivers of partner, neutral, and competitor perceptions and behaviors while defending friendly forces from misinformation, disinformation, and other forms of malign influence.

Through key leader, community, and band engagements and the strategic and responsive release of accurate and contextualized information, DAF PA builds public trust and support, enhances Airmen, Guardian, and joint force morale and readiness, projects global influence and deterrence, and counters malign influence.

DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE GUIDANCE

Department of Defense (DoD) policy makes available timely and accurate information to the public, Congress, and the news media to assess and understand the facts about national security and defense strategy. DoD Directive (DoDD) 5122.05⁵ delineates principles of information that apply in supporting the DoD policy.

In the context of military activities and operations across the competition continuum, PA provides an essential capability to commanders. Specifically, PA provides commanders with the means to leverage an understanding of how information impacts relevant actors' perceptions, attitudes, and decision-making processes to affect their behaviors in ways favorable to mission objectives.

This capability mainly occurs through inform activities which include releasing accurate information to put activities and operations in context, facilitating informed perceptions about those operations, and countering adversarial misinformation, disinformation, propaganda, and other influences. These activities aid the understanding, trust, and support of the US, allies, and partners while also acting to deter, dissuade, and otherwise influence adversaries and relevant actors. PA facilitates an honest, transparent, and candid dialogue between military leaders and their personnel and between the DAF and the American public. Through this dialogue, PA helps commanders enhance the morale and readiness of their personnel, plays a key role in building or enhancing public and

³ For additional information on DAF primary public communication, see AFDP 3-13, *Information in Air Force Operations*.

⁴ See Joint Publication (JP) 3-61, *Public Affairs*, and AFI 35-101, *Public Affairs Responsibilities and Management*, for additional information.

⁵ See DoDD 5122.05, *Assistant to the Secretary of Defense for Public Affairs* (ATSD[PA]), for additional information.

Congressional support, and communicates US resolve and capabilities to support operational and strategic objectives.

COMMANDER'S RESPONSIBILITY

Commanders are responsible for planning and executing a broad range of activities to achieve joint and service objectives. Those activities span from traditional maneuvers and direct action to exercises and engagement that can influence the perceptions, attitudes, and behaviors of allies, adversaries, and neutral audiences. In today's era of great power competition, information effects are as important as those created by maneuver and kinetic action. To effectively integrate information as a joint function, commanders incorporate narrative development and PA capabilities into orders and planning at all levels. As such, commanders require a clear understanding of how PA capabilities can be employed to help achieve desired effects.

When presented to JFCs, PA is considered an "information force," a capability that is organized, trained, and equipped, to create effects in and through the Information Environment (IE). PA creates these effects either alone or more often, in concert with other information forces through Operations in the Information Environment (OIE).

OIE are planned military actions that affect the drivers of behavior to damage the will, awareness, and understanding of adversaries while protecting joint force will, awareness, and understanding. PA contributes to OIE and the joint force's decisive advantage over adversaries by providing JFCs with trusted counsel and capabilities that help to maintain the credibility and legitimacy of joint force actions, particularly by, attributing adversary actions to damage their credibility, legitimacy, and will, provide situational awareness of the IE (particularly the impact of military actions on domestic and international perceptions), and help preserve the will to fight by undermining adversarial propaganda, disinformation, misinformation, and other forms of malign influence directed at friendly audiences.

PA's contributions to OIE largely come in the form of involvement in operational and communication planning, execution, and assessment, which ensures operations are aligned with the strategic narrative. PA also provides specific capabilities, critical to successful OIE, including security and policy review, media operations, command information, civic and key leader engagement, band operations, visual information (VI), and USAF Combat Camera (COMCAM).⁶ It is important to note that these capabilities should be balanced against competing priorities such as maintaining public trust and credibility, protecting operations security (OPSEC), concealing, and revealing capabilities to adversaries, and communicating with domestic and internal audiences. In addition, commanders employing PA for operational effects abide by the legal and policy constraints that PA can only release accurate information and appropriated funds may not be used for propaganda unless explicitly authorized for that purpose (e.g., Military

⁶ For additional information on Combat Camera, see Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Instruction (CJCSI) 3205.01C, *Joint Combat Camera*.

Information Support Operations). These restrictions help safeguard the credibility of the Defense Department, the DAF, and its units.⁷

While commanders serve as the public face and lead communicator of their unit, the PA officer (PAO) is the commander's principal spokesperson, senior PA advisor, and lead narrative developer. The PAO reports to and has direct access to the commander and has the knowledge, skills, resources, and authority to provide timely, truthful, and accurate information, counsel, and capabilities to the commander, the staff, and subordinate and supporting commanders. The PAO also approves the maximum disclosure of timely and accurate information to the public in accordance with DoD policy, which allows the commander to seize advantage in and through the IE.

Finally, PAOs also provide commanders with a perspective informed by a deliberate focus on public opinion and the overt IE. No other function offers this unique perspective that commanders depend on to avoid the groupthink dynamic.

⁷ See Disposition Authority Agency (DAA)-0330-2013-0014, *DoD Visual Information Records Schedule*, for additional information

CHAPTER 2: PUBLIC AFFAIRS CORE COMPETENCIES

PA's four core competencies describe the primary value PA contributes to overall mission accomplishment. These synergistic competencies are core contributions of PA operations to the mission and are conducted across the competition continuum. PA capabilities are most effective when integrated into strategic, operational, and tactical plans, and executed with direct support from commanders at all levels to achieve desired effects. The following are the core competencies of PA operations:

- ★ Trusted counsel to leaders.
- ★ Global influence and deterrence.
- ★ Airmen and Guardian morale and readiness.
- ★ Public trust and support.

TRUSTED COUNSEL TO LEADERS

PA provides commanders and other leaders with candid, timely, trusted, and accurate counsel, and guidance on the effective employment of PA capabilities. In addition, PA can assist commanders in achieving effects in and through the IE as well as assessing the impact of OIE alone or in concert with other information warfare capabilities and information forces. This PA competency includes providing predictive awareness of the IE through the observation, analysis, and interpretation of media reporting, social media sentiment analysis, lessons learned, and correlation of PA activities with relevant activities noted in intelligence reporting.

GLOBAL INFLUENCE AND DETERRENCE

PA contributes to global influence and deterrence by communicating United States capabilities, OAI, and resolve to allies and partners, competitors, or adversaries. Commanders employ PA capabilities in coordination with other USAF information warfare and operational capabilities and information forces to plan and execute operations in and through the IE that affect the cognitive drivers of behavior to achieve advantage. At the same time, commanders leverage this capability to defend friendly forces from misinformation, disinformation, and other forms of malign influence.

Information and power projection demonstrating US or friendly force capabilities and resolve can influence adversary decision-makers to seek options short of armed conflict. In addition, the integration of PA into strategy development and planning strengthens overall operational effectiveness by ensuring actions and messaging are unified by a common narrative. Conversely, the exclusion of PA in the initial stages of strategy and operational planning limits a commander's ability to seize and maintain an enduring information advantage.

PA operations are planned and synchronized at multiple levels to ensure operational success. PA operations can also employ strategies to preempt adversary propaganda and disinformation attempts that might otherwise weaken global influence and deterrence, Airmen and Guardian morale and readiness, and public trust and support.

USAFE-AFAFRICA

PA worked across the entire headquarters staff and with US European Command to swiftly declassify weapons system video after a USAF MQ-9, operating in international airspace, was damaged by Russian fighter aircraft in early 2023. The MQ-9, conducting routine operations in the region, was later forced to crash into the Black Sea, signifying a clear Russian act of aggression against a US-owned asset and violation of international norms. USAFE-AFAFRICA/PA's efforts were seen across the world, with the declassified footage airing internationally. As a result, Russia's unprofessional and unsafe conduct in the skies was highlighted to a global audience, denying Russian officials a window to seize the initiative in the IE and dispelling Russian disinformation efforts.

AIRMEN AND GUARDIAN MORALE AND READINESS

The morale and readiness of Airmen and Guardians directly translate into combat capability. PA helps DAF personnel understand their roles and explains how policies, programs, and OAI affect them and their families by conveying truthful, credible, and audience-relevant information.

In addition, PA counters misinformation, disinformation, propaganda, and other malign influences directed at our forces, particularly by enhancing their cognitive resilience. While a variety of definitions exist across the DoD, the interagency, and throughout academia, most seem to agree that cognitive resilience is mainly concerned with the ability of individuals to deal with increased stress and uncertainty and to identify and adapt to change. For PA professionals, this is particularly important given that the modern IE is characterized by a high degree of uncertainty and continual change. This uncertainty often results from the disinformation and propaganda our adversaries seed into the IE. In the era of great power competition, the weaponization of information is the primary means our adversaries use to overcome our physical overmatch.

By conducting command information activities, facilitating shared understanding, and authenticating trustworthy sources of information, PA enhances Airmen and Guardian's cognitive resilience competency. In addition, these efforts help reduce factors that cause stress and undermine efficient operations, such as confusion, uncertainty, fear, or rumors.

Informed and knowledgeable Airmen and Guardians can be relied upon to effectively deliver the appropriate themes and messages as they explain their mission to media representatives, public groups, or individuals. With Airmen and Guardians as credible, reliable spokespeople, PA operations can deliver global influence, deterrence, and public trust and support more effectively.

PUBLIC TRUST AND SUPPORT

PA activities build public understanding and support of expenditures for readiness, advanced weapons, training, personnel, and the associated costs of maintaining a strong air, space, and cyberspace force. With public support, the services' leaders can successfully recruit, train, and equip personnel to meet operational requirements.

PA capabilities give commanders the means to gain and maintain support for the service among diverse public audiences. These operations strengthen the bonds between the military and the public through open, honest dialogue. Data and imagery, continuously available in near-real time in the IE, can immediately affect public support. Likewise, distorted information and imagery distributed by an adversary can harm national will and support for military operations. Integrating with other operational capabilities and employed effectively, PA can enhance friendly information advantage while preempting and degrading an adversary's advantage.

To fight and win in an era of great power competition, commanders employ PA capabilities that foster ongoing public understanding and support of personnel, families, and OAI. Commanders leverage capabilities, including bands, VI, social media, and other products, to transcend traditional media and audience boundaries. Using the full range of PA capabilities expands the reach and impact of PA operations and its ability to build and enhance public trust and support for military operations.

CHAPTER 3: PUBLIC AFFAIRS TENETS

As the official method through which the US government communicates with both domestic and foreign audiences, PA inherently wields credibility and trust and is the only military capability that spans the boundaries between military, diplomatic, and information elements of national power.

However, the modern IE provides a permissive environment in which malign actors can easily lie, mislead, and asymmetrically attack larger institutions like the military, damaging hard-earned credibility. With these IE realities in mind, the following tenets serve as guideposts for the effective use of the PA as part of a comprehensive military and government approach to achieving service, joint, and national strategies.

- ★ Tell the truth.
- ★ Communicate with consistency.
- ★ Engage early, often, and with context.
- ★ Balance engagement and OPSEC.
- ★ Tell the DAF story.
- ★ Think strategically and critically.
- ★ Integrate communication into planning.

TELL THE TRUTH

Truth is the foundation of all PA operations. Truth enables credibility, credibility provides US military personnel with an information advantage relative to an adversary or competing messages that are not grounded in truth.

Commanders use PA to provide accurate information to the public promptly. The effectiveness of that communication in supporting the commander's overall objectives depends on maintaining the integrity and credibility of officially released information. Lying, attempting to deceive, or providing inaccurate information harms unit morale, destroys public trust and support, and risks ceding the information advantage to the adversary.

Commanders do not have the authority to use PA to lie or deceive as that restriction is written into US law and is not waivable. However, commanders incorporate PA into all forms of operational planning, including military deception (MILDEC), to create convergent instead of competing effects.⁸

⁸ See JP 3-13.4, *Military Deception*, for additional information.

COMMUNICATE WITH CONSISTENCY

Commanders, Airmen, and Guardians are charged with telling the stories of their mission, units, services, the DAF, and the Defense Department to advance command, service, departmental, and national objectives.

The effectiveness of this effort requires that commanders, with the assistance of PA, establish unit narratives that nest within those of higher echelons. Unit narratives localize and narrow higher echelon ones to reflect the unique contributions of the unit to the larger effort.⁹

Successful engagement in the modern IE requires every level to assist in advancing national, departmental, and service narratives, while higher headquarters provides the focus, units across the force provide additional volume. Effective information campaigns require both focus and volume. In practice, this translates to the aggressive delegation of engagement authority and close coordination on messaging to maintain narrative consistency.

A lack of consistency, often characterized by conflicting statements or inconsistent information can cause skepticism, undermine public trust and support, damage morale, and degrade the strength of global influence and deterrence efforts.

ENGAGE EARLY, OFTEN, AND WITH CONTEXT

The speed at which today's IE changes is unforgiving. Commanders have little time to detect and respond to emerging events before other actors seize the "first mover" advantage to shape audience perceptions. Additionally, commanders are charged with releasing timely, coordinated, and approved information about military operations. Establishing that guidance early requires thorough coordination through the chain of command but enables effective employment of PA. Difficult issues, events, or information potentially unfavorable to the USAF and United States Space Force (USSF) should be addressed openly, honestly, and as soon as possible. This is particularly important in the case of adverse information. Attempting to deny unfavorable information or failing to acknowledge its existence leads to media speculation. It creates the perception of a cover-up and results in lost public trust while degrading the overall effectiveness of PA. The delay in addressing unfavorable issues also provides adversaries with an uncontested opportunity to dominate the IE, twisting the facts to support their narrative.

Timeliness of response depends on situational awareness of the IE as well as a willingness and ability to engage in and through it, alone or in concert with other information capabilities, information forces, and operational capabilities to achieve convergent effects.

Situational awareness relies on observing and evaluating the IE against an established baseline for potential threats, vulnerabilities, and opportunities, particularly when they could impact the commander's decisions and employment of PA capabilities. This occurs

⁹ See JP 3-04, Appendix A, *Information in Joint Operations*, for additional information.

within the PA function by itself as well as collaboratively (e.g., USAF information warfare working groups, joint information cross-functional teams, or similar DAF and joint bodies).

Based on an awareness and understanding of the IE, PA conducts or participates in planning and engagement. The purpose of engagement, particularly with the media, is to provide context and balance – not to secure a “good” story. Even in the event of bad news, such as civilian casualties or personnel misconduct, engagement is critical to preserve credibility and reputation. An effective response to “bad” news often helps to restore credibility and reputation by demonstrating the organization’s values and willingness of the organization to take responsibility for its mistakes. Conversely, if an organization fails to engage, others will typically seize the advantage in the IE by filling the void of information, often in ways detrimental to the organization.

Engaging proactively often, especially before a crisis, is one of the most effective ways to establish and enhance the relationships and access to the information channels needed for crisis response. This is no different than preventive maintenance or even the way the US maintains relationships with allies and partners in peacetime through exercises and engagements.

Although PA engagement can take many forms, the most common is with the media. Though social media’s importance as a channel for communication continues to grow, traditional media engagements still provide powerful opportunities for PA to shape the IE by providing context, not merely facts and figures.

Reporters should be given access to units and personnel and, whenever feasible, be integrated into significant activities and operations. Integrating journalists into units informs more accurate reporting of the USAF and USSF by building relationships with Airmen and Guardians who can articulate their part of the mission, with PA providing broader context as required. This integration strengthens global influence and deterrence, builds public trust and support, and enhances morale.

In today’s highly contentious IE, characterized by degraded trust in institutions and the “noise” of misinformation and disinformation, commanders, and planners promote more accurate reporting by proactively engaging the media on their Operations, Activities, and Investments (OAI). Similar engagements should include civic leaders and domestic and international audiences to generate public understanding and support at home and abroad, as well as counter adversary and competitor efforts to spread malign influence. Similar engagements should include civic leaders and domestic and international audiences to generate public understanding and support at home and abroad, as well as counter adversary and competitor efforts to spread malign influence.

BALANCE ENGAGEMENT AND OPSEC

While commanders should publicly engage early and often, they should also protect operations by carefully considering risks to force, mission, and the development of future capabilities. As global competition continues, commanders at all levels need to carefully consider how the release of information at their level could help the adversary.

However, the need to protect operations does not mean commands should limit public communication. Global competition takes place in and through the IE, both overtly and

covertly. Additionally, the support of allies and partners requires continual public engagement. As such, public engagement serves as a form of preparation for the IE, setting conditions before possible conflict or crisis. Without effective public engagement, DoD, and DAF's ability to project power is degraded.

The balance between engagement and security extends to individual Airmen and Guardians as well. Beyond their responsibility for telling the USAF and USSF story, Airmen and Guardians are responsible for safeguarding sensitive information by being familiar with OPSEC considerations and abiding by them. The speed at which information passes through the IE makes attempts to censor military operations impractical, if not impossible. As a result, personnel should be made aware of what information is approved or not approved for release. Commanders and PA personnel should actively engage personnel and make them aware of the necessity to safeguard information and communicate responsibly.

PA personnel work closely with OPSEC program managers to ensure PA products are as thorough as possible without endangering OPSEC. However, as previously noted, it may be necessary to accept some risk with the release of information to meet operational objectives. Commanders are ultimately empowered to make such decisions, which are made within the context of the DAF's broader strategic objectives, particularly related to great power competition (e.g., it may be in the DAF's interest to take risks with the release of information about a weapons system, exercise, or other activity to drive adversary perceptions and behavior even if it entails some operational risk). Regardless, commanders ensure security reviews are performed, and release authority is granted at the lowest possible level to ensure the effectiveness of their PA operations.

Unnecessarily lengthy security reviews and declassification processes related to operational information often degrade its effectiveness and credibility when released. The information advantage is often achieved by the first to enter the IE. As such, delays limit the effectiveness of PA capabilities and increase the opportunity for adversaries to seize the information advantage.

TELL THE DEPARTMENT OF THE AIR FORCE STORY

Although commanders designate specific military personnel or civilian employees as official spokespersons, they should educate and encourage all military and civilian employees to tell their military stories. Provided with the appropriate information, they can share their perspectives on their part of the mission. By projecting competence, confidence, and commitment during interviews or discussions with family and friends, military members can help promote public understanding and support of military operations and activities. As is the case with most Americans, social media is one of the main ways Airmen and Guardians receive and pass information and engage with friends, family, and broader domestic and international communities of interest. Social media presents challenges to the force, particularly in the ease that it can be used to spread misinformation, disinformation, propaganda, or other forms of malign influence. However, it also provides an important vehicle for DAF personnel to tell their story to a broad (even global) audience, which can enhance the reach and credibility of official sources of information. When Airmen and Guardians engage on social media they abide by relevant DoD, USAF, or USSF guidance and consider OPSEC, operational risk, and privacy.

Members are aware that their social media activities reflect on themselves, their units, and the USAF or USSF. Commanders carefully consider how and when they use social media to communicate with key audiences, particularly as a non-kinetic supporting fire to shape strategic communication efforts. While social media can be a powerful tool to advance a commander's objectives, the proliferation of social media channels across the DAF can be counterproductive, diluting attention from where it is needed. To mitigate this issue, PA staffs invest time in creating compelling content, disseminating that content through a smaller number of official accounts (or ones that are targeted toward specific audiences), and leveraging external influencers.

DAF personnel are expected to understand and be able to explain general Air Force, Space Force, and individual professional information. By projecting confidence and commitment during interviews or discussions with family and friends, command personnel can help promote public support for military operations, enhance morale, and strengthen global influence. PA provides guidance and/or training to personnel before media engagements. These engagements contribute to mission accomplishment, can communicate restraint, or demonstrate resolve, and can serve as a deterrent to adversaries and competitors.

THINK STRATEGICALLY AND CRITICALLY

PA activities resonate in and through the IE. Even ostensibly local, internally oriented communication efforts can impact global perceptions. As such, PA professionals carefully consider the strategic implications of the words and images they use and the context in which specific audiences typically interpret them. This strategic and critical perspective underlies PA's core competency of Trusted counsel to leaders as well as the criticality of PA's role in operational planning and public communication of the DAF's OAI to both inform and influence.

INTEGRATE COMMUNICATION INTO PLANNING

PA is part of planning at all stages. As planning begins, PA helps develop the command narrative for a campaign or alongside the commander's intent. This narrative operational planning ensures all military actions (maneuver, kinetic, and engagement) align with the command and higher headquarters narratives. An operation's narrative is the intended sum of all activities and engagements to achieve a clear end state. In other words, a narrative is the story the operation is intended to tell an outside observer. Without a clear mission narrative, it is difficult, if not impossible, for a command to align actions and words effectively.

The DAF approach to information as a joint function focuses on the integration of information, maneuver, and kinetic capabilities together to achieve effects. For example, the strategic release of information can achieve some effects, but maneuver and kinetic actions can enhance it by sending a stronger message than words alone.

Effectively accounting for informational power in planning requires defining success through measurable objectives and how to assess it. Without establishing IE baselines and collecting relevant operational information it is nearly impossible to determine mission success. Since war is politics by other means, the military is often meant to achieve political objectives. This means success is measured in terms of changing the perceptions

and behaviors of international actors and audiences. Commands executing operations have the responsibility to collect, assess, and report, including changes in the IE. Assessing information is difficult but not impossible. However, it does require investments in time, attention, and relationships with other capabilities.

CHAPTER 4: PUBLIC AFFAIRS ACTIVITIES

The PA Tenets serve as guideposts for the effective use of the PA as part of a comprehensive military and government approach to achieving service, joint, and national strategies. Through these tenets, PA operations focus on the following synergistic activities to achieve the desired effects of its core competencies:

- ★ Communication and overt effects planning, assessment, and evaluation.
- ★ Security and policy review.
- ★ Media operations.
- ★ Community engagement.
- ★ Environmental public affairs.
- ★ Visual information.
- ★ Band operations.
- ★ Command information.
- ★ Information warfare.
- ★ Contingency operations and wartime readiness.

COMMUNICATION AND OVERT EFFECTS PLANNING

Communication planning is essential for overt effects in and through the IE at the strategic, operational, and tactical levels. Those effects can be achieved through communication and engagement related to OAI. PA is an essential part of all campaigning and planning, from traditional communication development to the progress of PA guidance (PAG) and talking points to broader operational planning, including COA and concept of operations development (i.e., both kinetic and non-kinetic targeting). PA's success in these efforts depends on maintaining situational awareness of the relevant aspects of the IE affecting their location or operation, while also understanding how it fits into the broader strategic context. Alone or in concert with other USAF information warfare capabilities or information forces, PAs continually monitor and analyze the IE. PA professionals rely on a knowledge of existing operation plans (OPLAN), commanders' intent, strategic context, relationships with other operational capabilities, and an understanding of the IE to build plans to achieve desired effects. PA's inclusion in strategy design and planning, including helping to develop assessment standards at the start of planning (and the collection of assessment metrics during and after execution) is essential to its effectiveness.

SECURITY AND POLICY REVIEW

While adhering to the policy of "maximum disclosure, minimum delay", PA ensures DAF information intended for public release (whether through official means or by USAF or USSF personnel and contractors in their capacity) neither adversely affects national security nor threatens service personnel's safety, security, or privacy. Per DoD and DAF

policies, information is not withheld from release merely to protect the service from criticism or embarrassment. Additionally, as the command spokesperson, PA is responsible for translating the commander's intent with sufficient context to ensure it can be accurately understood by various audiences. As such, PA provides advice and risk assessments to commanders and unit members on the security, accuracy, propriety, and policy adherence of information products or proposed engagements.

MEDIA OPERATIONS

Working proactively with the media increases trust and two-way communication. It is often one of the most rapid and credible means of delivering the commander's message. Remaining open, honest, and accessible to the maximum extent possible usually results in greater accuracy, context, and timeliness in communicating with internal and external audiences.

Commanders who use PA operations to gain predictive awareness of the IE can often successfully shape adverse issues and set the tone for subsequent discussion of the issues in the IE. Conversely, ineffective media operations can place commanders in a reactive stance. They are responding to the public debate established by an adversary or questions driving the news-media agenda. A reactive posture allows others to establish the context for an issue. It can degrade operations by eroding member morale and public and international support.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Community engagement encompasses activities of interest to the public, businesses, academia, veterans service organizations, military-related associations, think tanks, industry partners, and other community entities. All types of engagement led by PA, whether community, media, key leader, exercises with allies and partners, or internal communication with Airmen and Guardians, families, and other units should identify carefully chosen and narrowly defined audiences and a clear purpose with linkage to campaign or operational plans and higher headquarters guidance and/or priorities. Working collaboratively with and through these various groups enhances mutual understanding, cooperation, and support necessary for effective operations.

Forward-area community engagement and key-leader engagement in a contingency typically fall within the scope of a civil affairs plan. PA operators should be aware of civil affairs efforts and, when possible, complement them with PA products and activities. In peacetime, active community engagement programs help to build greater acceptance for operations with US and international audiences.

ENVIRONMENTAL PUBLIC AFFAIRS

PA supports environmental program objectives and requirements by facilitating public notification, engagement, and communicating the military's commitment to environmental excellence. This is particularly critical because environmental issues are often emotionally charged and can have significant detrimental effects on the military's relationship with local communities and local, state, and Tribal governments.

VISUAL INFORMATION

Today's IE is cluttered and noisy. To break through to audiences, effective messaging should have compelling imagery to accompany it. While it may seem easy to capture, compelling imagery takes careful planning and foresight. Capturing dynamic maneuvers and operations adds a level of difficulty. Therefore, commanders provide resources and attention to ensure the successful capture and release of effective imagery. While PA is largely responsible to plan for and execute the capture of imagery, sometimes PA is required to task other assets (e.g., particularly for locations PA cannot access such as single-seat aircraft or from intelligence sensors).

When properly planned, captured, and disseminated VI products, such as photos, video, and graphics, documenting the DAF's visual history, communicate strategic, operational, and tactical mission requirements, goals, and objectives, enhance the credibility of friendly statements, and impact the perceptions and decision making of audiences.

Commanders at all levels employ VI capabilities to support operational planning and decision-making, battle-damage assessment, training, and OIE. In particular, the contextualized release of imagery can help achieve assurance and deterrence objectives and counterpropaganda, misinformation, disinformation, and other forms of malign influence. The DAF is required to transfer VI products to the National Archives and Records Administration and for this reason, commanders should prioritize using VI assets to support mission-related activities.

USAF COMCAM is a specialized PA capability that provides the Office of the Secretary of Defense (OASD), the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, the military departments, the combatant commands, and joint task forces with rapidly deployable, combat-trained communication teams skilled at planning and executing the full spectrum of PA tactics, techniques, procedures while delivering special expertise in visual documentation and rapid imagery transmission to support operations across the conflict continuum. USAF COMCAM teams are organized, trained, and equipped for agile combat employment in support of departmental or joint force planning and operational requirements including exercises, worldwide crises, contingencies, humanitarian operations, and conflict operations. They are equipped for day and night operations, austere conditions, and possess fully qualified and certified aircrew members for missions requiring aerial documentation. Within Agile Combat Employment, forward-deployed USAF COMCAM teams may often be the only PA force in the area and ensure their efforts are aligned with relevant guidance. USAF COMCAM is PA's primary source of Non-Career Enlisted Aircrew Flyers (Status Code 9D) that provide aerial imagery for combat missions. Public Affairs Airmen, who are not in COMCAM, can provide aerial imagery for other missions under Operational Support Flyer Status Code 9C.¹⁰

BAND OPERATIONS

USAF bands provide a broad spectrum of musical support for events that enhance the morale, motivation, and esprit de corps of personnel, foster public trust and support, aid recruiting initiatives, and promote national interests at home and abroad. Furthermore, bands serve as a diplomatic asset when tasked under Defense Support to Public

¹⁰ See DoDI 5040.02, *Visual Information*, for additional information.

Diplomacy, positively influencing foreign decision-makers and public audiences, even those who were previously hostile. Finally, bands provide information demonstrating readiness, operational capabilities, and DAF resolve to use air and space power to achieve operational objectives.

COMMAND INFORMATION

PA provides communication tools to link personnel with their leaders. Command information helps personnel, and their families understand their purpose, role, and value to their service. A free flow of command information creates awareness of, and support for the mission, this increases individuals' effectiveness as ambassadors, enhances morale, reduces the spread of rumors and disinformation, and provides avenues for feedback.

A historical aspect of command information has been ceremonial support. However, the growing availability of personal cameras, limited PA personnel and resourcing, and the need to focus communication efforts on deliberate overt effects to accomplish mission and campaign objectives has limited PA's support to focus on command information activities that are more aligned with commanders' mission objectives missions. For example, command information that demonstrates readiness, operational capabilities, or resolve may influence foreign decision-makers, including potential adversaries as well as allies and partners.

INFORMATION WARFARE

The USAF defines information warfare as "the employment of military capabilities in and through the IE to deliberately affect adversary human and system behavior and preserve friendly freedom of action during cooperation, competition, and conflict".¹¹ Further, the USAF recognizes six "principal" information warfare capabilities: PA, Intelligence, Surveillance, and Reconnaissance, Information Operations, Cyberspace Operations, Electromagnetic Spectrum Operations, and Weather. They are organized, trained, and equipped to converge their capabilities to achieve information advantage and preserve decision advantage by creating effects in and through the IE.

As the DAF's sole corps of professional public communicators, PAs are among a small group of Information Warfare professionals who are organized, trained, and equipped to converge their capabilities to achieve information advantage and preserve decision advantage by creating effects in and through the IE.

Although the Air Component Commander's PA and information warfare staff both plan public communication and engagement activities, OIE differs in its approach regarding domestic and international populations, scope, and intent. As such, PA directly reports to the commander as part of their staff, while providing capabilities to the overall OIE effort by serving in information warfare Working Groups and other operational planning bodies.

¹¹ For additional information on information warfare, see AFDP 3-13, *Information in Air Force Operations*.

CONTINGENCY OPERATIONS AND WARTIME READINESS

PA is both a competition and combat force, fully trained, and prepared to meet the needs of the DAF and the joint warfighter from home station and inside or outside the wire while deployed. PA researches, plans, implements, and assesses US military public information activities and resources in support of the commander's intent and concept of operations alone or in concert with other USAF information warfare capabilities and information forces. PA enhances morale and readiness to accomplish the mission, gains and maintains public trust and support for military operations, provides trusted counsel to leaders, communicates US resolve and capabilities in a manner that directly affects the operational environment through global influence and deterrence, and ensures contextualized visual documentation of joint and DAF operations.

CHAPTER 5: PUBLIC AFFAIRS AND OPERATIONS IN THE INFORMATION ENVIRONMENT

THE INFORMATION ENVIRONMENT

The IE is defined as the aggregate of social, cultural, linguistic, psychological, technical, and physical factors that affect how humans and automated systems derive meaning from, act upon, and are impacted by information, including the individuals, organizations, and systems that collect, process, disseminate, or use information. The IE is comprised of various elements categorized as either physical or cognitive. The physical aspects are those that information overlaps with the physical world (command and control systems, newspapers, books, etc.). Cognitive aspects are those involving how human and automated decision-making occurs and how information is perceived. PA personnel should be attuned to the physical and cognitive aspects, particularly interpersonal communication, international public information, mass media, social media, and the internet. Through these channels, relevant actors can disseminate information that can directly affect the success or failure of military operations.

Audiences perceive information through the prism of their own national, cultural, political, and regional perspectives, the introduction of information can influence these perceptions. This information is often provided by media outlets that report information filtered through other prisms. These prisms can substantially alter the understanding of the original message, especially when the information is of interest to populations of foreign countries. The IE is pervasive. Commanders and PA personnel should expect information intended for a specific audience to crossflow to others.

The modern IE is characterized by 24-hour media reporting and instantaneous analysis of events. This allows audiences in the US and worldwide to receive real-time information from national leaders and the theater of operations. Additionally, the proliferation of social media results in an environment where relevant actors may be influenced by an overwhelming amount of information—accurate or inaccurate. The effect can change the strategic goals, policy, guidance, and behavior of allies, partners, competitors, and adversaries, and impact military operations.

MASS MEDIA

Both traditional mass media and social media provide relevant actors (e.g., social media influencers) with the ability to have significant impacts in and through the IE across the entirety of the competition continuum.

Not only do these forms of media provide global reach through technology and a complex web of relationships, but they can also actively gather, synthesize, and distribute news and information (including misinformation, disinformation, and propaganda) around the clock at an extremely high tempo.

Whether traditional or social media, different outlets define and cover news differently, often with widely varying biases that can change how events are framed.

PUBLIC RELIANCE ON INFORMATION

The insatiable demand for current information concerning world events provides commanders with a valuable opportunity to employ PA capabilities. Timely, accurate, and relevant information provided during peacetime builds credibility with news media representatives and the public, translating into relationships vital to the warfighter.

The relationship built between the military and the public in peacetime is vital to mission success in wartime or during contingencies since the information comes from the US. Coalition forces are typically more likely to be accepted as credible, truthful, and useful than the adversary's information. This truth-based relationship strengthens PA's operational capabilities to counter adversary misinformation, disinformation, and propaganda. It leverages credibility to shape global influence and deterrence. It also builds public trust and supports and enhances the morale and readiness of the DAF's personnel and families.

Although US adversaries have used and misled domestic and international media to communicate propaganda, PA operations conducted by the US are truth-based. They will not intentionally mislead the US Congress, the public, or the media.

OPERATIONS IN THE INFORMATION ENVIRONMENT

The information as a joint function was introduced in 2018 and provides commanders with the ability to understand how information impacts the operating environment, use information to support human and automated decision-making, and leverage information through offensive and defensive actions. The activities and capabilities within this function aid commanders and staff in leveraging information to achieve objectives to attain the desired end state, particularly through OIE.

OIE are "military actions involving the integrated employment of multiple information forces to affect drivers of behavior by informing audiences, influencing foreign relevant actors, attacking and exploiting relevant actor information, information networks, and information systems, and by protecting friendly information, information networks, and information systems."¹²

Since all DAF OAI communicate a message or intent that can be leveraged to support the achievement of a commander's objectives, the DAF leverages a range of capabilities, including those provided by PA through information warfare, to conduct OIE.

Because of the pervasive nature of the IE, commanders should remain aware that information disseminated through other information capabilities, such as military information support operations (MISO) and MILDEC could affect unintended target audiences and/or compromise information objectives. To mitigate this, PA, MISO, and MILDEC operations should be coordinated to ensure that the credibility of US communications is maintained. Truth is foundational to the credibility of all PA operations, as is adherence to the DoD principles of information of "maximum disclosure, minimum

¹² See AFDP 3-13, *Information in Air Force Operations*, for additional information.

delay.” As such, timely and agile dissemination is essential to achieve desired information effects.

PA operations are continuously conducted across the competition continuum. The continuous planning, execution, and assessment of the broad range of PA operations enhance a commander's ability to shape the IE, achieve desired effects, and meet operational objectives. The basic tenets, capabilities, and activities of PA operations remain the same whether units are at home station or deployed—only the specific focus of the operations change. PA operations are most effective in war or contingencies when integrated with other informational capabilities. They are part of the strategy development, planning, and execution phases of operations.

To provide the relevant counsel in support of operations, PA is fully integrated into staff planning and activities, and related information operations teams, cells, and other bodies, with the requisite and rapid access to critical information. PA personnel develop communication strategies and plans and monitor current operations for emerging issues that can impact the overall operation positively or negatively (e.g., a successful strike using a new weapon system, civilian casualties, fratricide, etc.). PA expertise is essential to interpret events in the IE. It enhances commanders' operational courses of action, particularly when fully integrated into joint operation or campaign plans. Similarly, PA should be fully integrated into USSF organizations' operational activities and components.

COMMAND RELATIONSHIPS

PA reports directly to the commander as special staff to provide advice and counsel but should also integrate into operational planning, orders development, operational monitoring, and targeting processes. Additionally, PA engages with direct liaison authority through functional capability channels with higher headquarters, equivalent echelon commands and sister services, interagency organizations, and subordinate units to allow for rapid response to IE changes and to provide and receive communication guidance. Through this interconnected relationship web, PA is often best placed to detect emerging information threats and opportunities and relay them for command action.

At the Air Component echelon, PA focuses more on planning than tactical execution. PA specifically participates in command planning, targeting, weaponeering, and assessment/analysis processes with a moderate level of direct engagement in the IE. Effective allocation of PA may include embedding PA liaisons into Air Component staff directorates as appropriate to ensure effective integration with core campaign and mission planning. At the tactical level, PA focuses more on direct IE engagement and is the primary VI capability. At all echelons, PA should be a part of regular command battle rhythm events to effectively synchronize, deconflict, and prioritize command activities.

Commanders should consider that PA forces may not be able to effectively integrate into planning and execution or provide trusted counsel without the proper clearances and access to necessary and relevant information, such as finished intelligence products and or compartmented information.

In overseas theaters, each US embassy has a country team that oversees PA operations, to ensure they support established country-plan objectives. Many OIE efforts have a strategic impact and require PA personnel, in coordination with the OASD PA, to work

closely with the country teams throughout the planning and execution phases. This close coordination ensures these efforts support US objectives and diplomatic efforts and prevent conflicting communication efforts or other unintended consequences.

PA operations are most effective when backed by the authority and credibility of the theater air component commander. Subordinating PA operations to a lower command conflict with DoD and DAF policy because it reduces access to critical information, hampers reaction time, and may degrade PA credibility with public audiences and media. Therefore, maintaining direct relationships between commanders and PA provides the best opportunities for success when employing PA operations.

In addition to capabilities provided by service components to joint commands, Air and Space Force OAI drive deliberate and unintended effects on adversary and competitor perceptions. Leveraging those OAI, or mitigating negative outcomes, largely depends on PA's public communication capability and the revelation (or concealment) of information to avoid granting advantage to the adversary while still ensuring that the DAF meets its obligation of transparency to Congress and the American people. The prioritization, strategy, tactics, and guidance related to those efforts are directed from the DAF and service headquarters levels in coordination with the Office of the Secretary of Defense and the Joint Staff.

COMMANDER'S COMMUNICATION SYNCHRONIZATION

The DAF supports DoD efforts to synchronize, align, and integrate communication activities to facilitate an understanding of how the planning and execution of DoD strategies, plans, operations, and activities should be received or understood by key audiences. Inconsistencies between what US forces say and do can reduce DoD credibility and negatively affect current and future missions.

Commander's communication synchronization (CCS) is a commander's process for coordinating and synchronizing themes, messages, images, operations, and actions to support strategic communication-related objectives. This synchronization process ensures the integrity and consistency of themes and messages to the lowest tactical level through the integration and synchronization of all relevant communication activities.

As the DAF's primary capability for public communication, PA plays a crucial role in the CCS process, consistent with JP 3-61, PA typically leads the CCS process for the command. PA counsels leadership on how audiences perceive military actions and assesses how conditions in the IE may affect operations. PA may create, strengthen, or preserve conditions favorable to accomplishing desired objectives by providing the public with timely, factual, and accurate information. PA also analyzes and assesses communication effects and their progress toward mission accomplishment. These efforts assist commanders with decision-making and adjusting their communication strategy when necessary.

CHAPTER 6: PLANNING, EXECUTION, AND ASSESSMENT

EFFECTS-BASED OPERATIONS (EBO) APPROACH FOR PUBLIC AFFAIRS

The effects-based operations approach (EBO)¹³ is an approach in which operations are planned, executed, assessed, and adapted to influence or change systems or capabilities to achieve desired outcomes. EBO encompasses *objectives*, *effects*, and *actions*:

- ★ *Objectives* are clearly defined, decisive, attainable, and measurable goals toward which every military operation should be directed.
- ★ *Effects* are the full range of outcomes, events, or consequences that result from a particular action or set of actions.
- ★ *Actions* are individual deeds or acts that could be either kinetic (physical, material) or non-kinetic (logical, behavioral).

Properly planned, executed, and assessed PA efforts take a fundamental EBO in terms of creating an "effect" by disseminating timely, truthful, and accurate information to achieve a particular objective. The success of PA is contingent upon the desired effects of PA operations being integrated throughout all phases of military operations and related to appropriate objectives.

INTEGRATION WITH OPERATIONS

The PAO is responsible for planning and executing PA operations to support and create the desired effects necessary to accomplish the commander's operational objectives. PA liaisons may be aligned across staff directorates and divisions as appropriate to serve in a planning and deconflicting capacity.

OIE teams and cells help integrate OIE activities into joint air component OPLAN. While PA operations should be closely coordinated with OIE, the timely flow of information for release in public IE should not be impeded, even if it will have a detrimental effect. PA professionals directly advise the commander and deliver truthful time-critical information to meet commanders' desired effects.

During every phase of contingency operations, PA specialists should be represented in planning, execution, and assessment efforts across the staff. The expertise of PA professionals in dealing with the public and news media is key to achieving the commander's objectives. In addition, PA's role in coordinating and deconflicting information is vital because PA personnel are the agents for releasing official information to the public and keeping stakeholders informed.

The synergy between PA activities in the unclassified environment and operations, which may involve sensitive and classified information, is crucial to gaining and maintaining an information advantage. Close coordination with operations staff and subject matter experts to promptly sanitize and release sensitive information without compromising sources or operations can be highly valuable for countering adversary propaganda, illuminating adversary deception or denial tactics, and highlighting US precision,

¹³ See AFDP 3-0, *Operations and Planning*, for additional information.

discrimination, and discretion. PA forces cannot provide trusted counsel to commanders without clearances and access to the full operational picture. Therefore, PA personnel should have clearances and unescorted access (where permitted) to all elements of the AOC, including intelligence, special access programs, and special access requirements facilities. In addition, PA personnel should understand warfighting organization, concepts, terminology, and the basic principles of classifying information and foreign disclosure procedures. This understanding enables PA operators to effectively communicate service information and capabilities properly, increasing their usefulness and credibility with the public, commanders, and other disciplines and functions.

“The Department [of Defense] has continued to evolve and refine our thinking about how to plan, resource, and conduct operations in the information environment. When executed correctly, DoD can achieve its mission more effectively, more affordably, and with reduced risk to our operating forces. DoD must evolve from a primary focus on executing its preferred method of warfare to one that incorporates information as a foundational element of plans and operations.”

**-- Secretary of Defense Mark T. Esper,
Testimony to the Senate Armed Services Committee, 2019**

PLANNING, EXECUTION, AND ASSESSMENT

Effective PA operations planning should be coordinated and integrated into the strategy development and planning processes to achieve synergy with other plans. The PA plan is an important annex within the air component OPLAN and, potentially, the joint air OPLAN. PA personnel, particularly those at air component commands, should also work closely with the OIE teams and cells to develop fully integrated plans that are deconflicted throughout the planning, deployment, execution, and assessment phases of an operation or campaign.

PLANNING

This process starts with mission planning and narrative development. PA leads narrative development with the input of other command planners and functions to provide unity and capture the commander’s voice.¹⁴

This initial guidance then drives the course of action development which leads to a campaign or mission’s lines of effort, intermediate military objectives, and specified tasks across staff functions and subordinate units. PA should be involved in each of these steps as described in JP 3-04 and JP 5-0. Specifically, PA contributes its unique perspective informed by public opinion and professional expertise, suggests mission objectives, nominates specified tasks for various staff and subordinate units, and offers PA capability to create deliberate effects as part of mission accomplishment.

¹⁴ For additional information on mission narrative development, see JP 3-04, Appendix A, Information in Joint Operations.

PA is part of operational planning, shaping base orders and specified tasks, which can include messaging objectives and communication effects as well as producing the Annex F to define PA required resources and capability application. PAG supplements orders by accounting for rapid changes in the IE and evolutions to communication focus areas.

PA activities, like any other military activity, should have a clear purpose and be tailored to a given target audience to achieve a deliberate effect. Planning these PA activities should be done in coordination with other information, maneuver, and kinetic actions and aligned against desired targets or effects. Generally, this is accomplished either through a targeting or other effects process such as a Joint Targeting Board or Joint Effects Board. OASD PA and the JFC's plans for PA operations guide efforts at lower echelons of command. Planning by subordinate units should be based on the assessed information needs and opportunities of their commands. It should be consistent with the plans and objectives of higher commands. Responsibility for coordination and deconfliction of planning and operations rests with the subordinate command PA staff.

Planning for PA operations is reflected in several documents, including communications plans, OPLAN, and PA guidance. The JFC develops an overall PA operations communication plan reflected in the PA annex to the OPLAN or contingency plan. Separate but mutually supporting plans should be developed for each component. PA planners typically prepare the PA annex to the OPLAN and determine the communications requirements, associated costs and equipment, and the total number of PA personnel required in the theater. Air component PA planners ensure PA plans support the JFC's intent and objectives.

Commanders oversee the development of communication plans, which should use all activities available to conduct PA operations. These plans focus on strategic and tactical communication. Strategic-level theater and global campaign plans provide direction for long-range communication efforts concerning the organizational mission and objectives, while tactical plans direct communication on specific operations, events, or issues. In OPLAN, commanders should identify the tasks and resources required to achieve their informational and strategic communication objectives in a PA annex. PA planners should review theater/global campaign plans, and OPLAN, and consider all PA activities to achieve desired effects in the IE.

This consideration should include all products and resources available—web products, radio, and television broadcasting, VI services, civic groups, and community engagement, COMCAM, and musical programs. PA issues and requirements should be included in all aspects of peacetime, wartime, and contingency planning. Particular attention should be paid to the role PA plays during the transition into and out of wartime operations, as public opinion and support are especially important during these times.

DEPLOYMENT

Personnel engaged in PA operations should be among the first people sent into a theater (situation permitting) when engaged in deployed operations. Positive and balanced media coverage at the outset of military action can rapidly influence public and political opinion and affect strategic decision-making. Additionally, PA personnel provide VI capabilities that aid operational planning, decision-making, and preserving a historical and evidentiary record of deployed activities. Therefore, commanders should consider deploying PA

personnel with the first units. They should deploy the equipment needed to accomplish their missions to ensure timely, accurate reporting and documentation of the operation. PA operations should be coordinated to obtain synergistic effects and avoid duplication of effort. These PA assets also can help the commander interpret the public IE from the strategy development and planning phases to the start of an operation, propose PA courses of action appropriate for the situation, and adjust decision-making accordingly.

EXECUTION

PA participates in operations across the competition continuum and is often the most prevalent information capability outside of conflict. Effective communication at the component or JFC level usually requires ongoing coordination between various echelons of the DoD, the Department of State (DoS), other US government agencies, non-governmental organizations, and media. A State Department country team is concerned about activities that may affect the attitudes of the host-nation population. Therefore, component commanders or JFCs should require coordination of major initiatives and PA engagement with the appropriate country team or regional bureau to ensure the release of consistent information supporting US national interests.

Personnel engaged in PA operations should be among the first people sent into a theater when engaged in deployed operations to provide immediate VI documentation both for command and national decision support and to inform the public as appropriate. Balanced media coverage informed by PA products and information at the outset of military operations can rapidly influence public and political opinion and affect strategic decision-making. Additionally, PA and COMCAM personnel provide VI capabilities that aid future operational planning, follow-on decision-making, and preserving a historical and evidentiary record of deployed activities.

During execution, PA can leverage media relationships to share true, accurate, and timely information on the record, off record, and in the background to inform and shape media understanding of joint and DAF activities. Beyond the traditional release of PA products, this unique position as the interface with external communication conduits offers PA the ability to engage the IE quickly and effectively in response to threats and opportunities. However, commanders should grant trust to PA and assume the risk for this approach to work well.

ASSESSMENT

Assessment of PA operations is fundamental to the plan-execute-assess cycle. However, assessing information often requires patience as effects often bear out over weeks, months, or even years. Therefore, it is critical to plan and implement a sustained and comprehensive command assessment approach across all contributing capabilities. PA measures of effectiveness should be developed to gauge success in supporting mission success as an integrated subset of overall campaign or mission measures of effectiveness. However, it is important to note that the correlation between information activities and cognitive outcomes are notoriously hard to demonstrate. As such, PA professionals should use classified and unclassified information sources, media reporting, polling data, intelligence reporting, adversary propaganda, etc., to measure the effectiveness of their efforts in the IE.

PA and Media Relationships

PA personnel have shared open-source information about emerging events in their area of responsibility by pointing to published reports on human rights violations that US national media were not aware of. Sharing this information caused reporters to investigate and report on stories that helped advance command narratives and harm those of adversaries. All of this was accomplished through relationships between PA and media and the sharing of true, accurate, and timely information that was informed by the PA's access to intelligence and operational reporting.

Maintaining these relationships helps to prevent crises. In another example, the same national news reporter from the previous example contacted PA to confirm a rumor of US troops crossing an international border in an overseas AOR. Because of the relationship between the reporter and the PA officer, the PA was able to confirm with operations staff that the claim was not true which led to the reporter not running the story. If the story had run, it likely would have created international conflict in the region and would have harmed ongoing US operations and relationships.

In addition, PA should work alongside intelligence, information operations forces, operations research, and planners to incorporate data, intelligence, and analysis to create a holistic effectiveness assessment. This is because PA generally cannot assess effectiveness alone. Accordingly, PA adjusts communication strategies to achieve the commander's desired effects. This assessment folds back into the planning effort to ensure mid-course updates to the plan are properly executed.

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