



COMMANDER'S RESPONSIBILITY

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The public affairs (PA) program is a commander's responsibility and commanders are ultimately responsible for successfully integrating PA capabilities into the organization's operations; as such, commanders require a clear understanding of how those capabilities can be employed to help achieve desired operational effects.

Along with other information-related capabilities, Commanders depend on PA capabilities to provide situational awareness of the relevant aspects of the [information environment](#) (IE) and to provide a means for effectively operating in it. Operations in the information environment (OIE) are the sequence of actions that use information to affect behavior by informing audiences; influencing external relevant actors; and affecting information, information networks, and information systems. By putting joint operations in context, facilitating informed perceptions about military operations, PA undermines adversarial [propaganda](#), [disinformation](#), [misinformation](#) and other forms of [malign influence](#) directed at friendly audiences, and helps achieve national, strategic, operational, and tactical objectives. Information is a foundational element of all military strategies, campaigns, and operations. As such, PA capabilities are most effective when planned and executed as an integral part of an overall operation, particularly OIE.

PA also facilitates open and honest two-way communication within the Air Force and between the Air Force and the public. PA support helps commanders enhance the morale and readiness of their personnel by personally communicating with them. As spokespersons for their service, the Department of Defense (DOD), and the US Government, commanders and their representatives play a vital role in building public support for the military and communicating US resolve and capabilities to international audiences in a manner that can help achieve operational and strategic objectives.

The PA officer (PAO) is the commander's principal spokesperson, senior PA advisor, and a member of the personal staff. The PAO must have the knowledge, skills, resources, access, and authority to provide timely, truthful, and accurate information, visual information, and context to the commander, the staff, and subordinate and supporting commanders, and to rapidly release information in accordance with DOD policy and guidance to the news media and the public.

Providing the maximum disclosure of timely and accurate information as rapidly as possible enables the commander to seize the information initiative. In addition to the guidance in this document, Air Force Instruction (AFI) 35-101, [Public Affairs Responsibilities and Management](#), contains a list of specific responsibilities for commanders regarding their PA program.
