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FOR DOCTRINE DEVELOPMENT AND EDUCATION



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INFORMATION ENVIRONMENT

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The [information environment](#) (IE) is inextricably linked to all operational environments and consists of physical, information, and cognitive dimensions. The physical dimension is where information overlaps with the physical world. The information dimension is where information is collected, processed, stored, disseminated, displayed, and protected. The cognitive dimension is where human and automated decision making takes place based on how information is perceived. All three dimensions directly affect military operations. Public affairs (PA) personnel must be especially attuned to the physical and information dimensions, particularly in terms of interpersonal communication, international public information, mass media, social media, and the internet. Through these channels, relevant actors can disseminate information and context that can directly affect the success or failure of military operations.

The ability to share information in near-real time, anonymously and securely, is a capability that is both an asset and a potential vulnerability to us, our allies, and our adversaries. Since the IE is characterized by its pervasiveness, commanders and PA personnel may also expect information released for a specific audience to eventually cross-flow to others.

Audiences perceive information through the prism of their own national, cultural, political, and regional perspectives; these perceptions can be influenced by the introduction of information. This information is often provided by media outlets that report information filtered through additional 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 modern IE is characterized by 24-hour media reporting and instantaneous analysis of events, allowing audiences in the US and throughout the world 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, adversaries, and have a substantial impact on military operations.
