AIR FORCE DOCTRINE PUBLICATION (AFDP) 3-61
PUBLIC AFFAIRS OPERATIONS

PUBLIC AFFAIRS RELATIONSHIP TO INFORMATION

Last Updated: 10 Sep 2020

The information joint function encompasses the management and application of capabilities and activities alongside other functions to influence relevant actor perceptions, behavior, action or inaction, and human and automated decision making. Ultimately, the activities and capabilities within this function aid commanders and staff in understanding and leveraging information to achieve the commander's objectives and attain the desired end state. Those activities and capabilities support operations in the information environment (OIE), which 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.

Related to OIE is adversary-focused information warfare (IW), which the Air Force describes as the employment of military capabilities in and through the information environment to deliberately affect adversary human and system behavior and to preserve friendly freedom of action across the competition continuum. The principal Air Force capabilities integrated and applied to achieve desired IW effects are cyberspace operations; electronic warfare; information operations (IO); and intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance. However, public affairs (PA) is a crucial enabler of IW.

OIE and IW represent new ways of looking at the application of informational power, recognizing that in the context of primarily peer competition, information is a foundational element of all military strategies, campaigns, and operations. While OIE and IW organizations practice and doctrine matures, commanders mainly rely on PA and IO to plan public information activities to influence adversaries.

IO is "the integrated employment, during military operations, of information-related capabilities (IRCs) in concert with other lines of operation to influence, disrupt, corrupt, or usurp the decision making of adversaries and potential adversaries while protecting our own" (Joint Publication 3-13, *Information Operations*).

Although both PA and IO staffs plan public information activities, IO differs in their authorities regarding domestic and international populations, scope, and intent. As such, PA and IO are separate functional areas with PA serving as part of the

commander's staff and IO staff sections supporting operations from the operations directorate or within the air operations center. IO does not "own" individual capabilities but instead employs IRCs in an integrated manner to create desired effects. While IO is doctrinally responsible for integrating IRCs into the joint planning process, it is a collaborative process. It does not give IO personnel the authority to plan or speak for PA.

Because of the pervasive nature of the IE, commanders should remain aware that information disseminated through military information support operations (MISO) and military deception could reach US audiences. PA, MISO, and military deception operations should be coordinated to ensure that the credibility of US operations and communications is retained. Close coordination also can prevent the inadvertent compromise of a MISO or deception plan. PA operations can document force projection but should not simulate it by using false information.

The strategic effects that PA operations can create highlight the importance of ensuring PA personnel are involved throughout the operation planning process, as well as during the execution and assessment of operations. PA officers and staffs should work with IO planners to coordinate and deconflict communication activities; while PA cannot provide false or misleading information, PA personnel should be aware of the intent of other IRCs, such as military deception and MISO, to lessen the chance of compromise. It requires PA staff to participate in IO cells, teams, and emergent OIE and IW organizations and have the appropriate security clearances for participation in these processes.

> *We're moving out with a mandate to transform the way the Air Force fights in the information environment. Our adversaries should take note: No longer will they be able to effect a strategic double-speak – publicly engaging in the international process while simultaneously taking actions in the cyber and information space to undermine international norms. They will no longer have plausible deniability; we will expose actions that undermine international norms and take the conflict in the information environment to their front lines.*
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> **Lt. Gen. Timothy D. Haugh,
> Commander, 16th Air Force activation, 2019**