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FOR DOCTRINE DEVELOPMENT AND EDUCATION



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PLANNING, DEPLOYMENT, EXECUTION, AND ASSESSMENT

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Effective public affairs (PA) operations planning should be fully coordinated with and integrated into the [strategy development](#) and [planning processes](#) from the outset to achieve synergy with other plans. The PA plan is an important annex within the air component [operation plan](#) (OPLAN), as well as, potentially, the joint air operations plan. PA personnel, particularly those at air component commands, must also work closely with the [information operations](#) (IO) / information warfare (IW) teams and cells to develop plans that are fully integrated and deconflicted throughout the planning, deployment, execution, and assessment phases of an operation or campaign.

The Department [of Defense (DOD)] 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

PA operations, through [direct liaison authorized](#) (DIRLAUTH), support informational objectives of the US national leadership, the DOD, federal agencies, state and civil authorities, combatant commands, joint task forces (JTFs), major commands, and subordinate units. Planning for PA operations is driven by the DOD and should be conducted at all levels of command and across the range of military operations. Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Public Affairs (OASD [PA]) and the [joint force commander's](#) (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 and 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 types of documents including communications plans, OPLANs, and PA guidance. Commanders oversee the development of communication plans, which should use all activities available to carry out 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 OPLANs, 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 OPLANs, and consider all [PA activities](#) to achieve desired effects in the [information environment](#).

This consideration should include all products and resources available –web products, radio and television broadcasting, visual information services, civic groups and community engagement, combat camera, 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 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 and combat camera personnel provide visual information capabilities that aid operational planning, decision making, and preserving a historical and evidentiary record of deployed activities. Therefore, commanders should give great consideration to deploying PA personnel with the first units. They should deploy with the equipment needed to accomplish their missions to ensure timely, accurate reporting and documentation of the operation. PA operations should be closely coordinated to obtain synergistic effects and avoid duplication of effort. These PA assets also can help the commander interpret the public information environment from the strategy development and planning phases to the start of an operation, propose public affairs courses of action appropriate for the situation, and adjust decision making accordingly.

EXECUTION

Commanders should ensure PA operations are able to support the range of contingencies, from bare-base operations to establishing a media operations center. The primary goal is to expedite the flow of accurate and timely information about the activities of US and coalition forces.

Effective PA operations at the JTF or unified command level may require close coordination between the US military, the Department of State (DOS), and other US government agencies. Usually, an executive order defines agency responsibilities, functions, and [interagency](#) relationships. Either the senior DOS representative or the JFC will be assigned overall responsibility for US activities in the area. PA operations can also, and often do, work in concert with agencies outside the Service, including other branches of service, coalition partners, government agencies, and private organizations.

In foreign countries, the President acts typically through an ambassador or chief-of-mission, who relies on a country team comprised of representatives from various agencies assigned to the US embassy or mission. The country team is concerned with matters involving PA operations and other activities that may affect the attitudes of the host-nation population. Therefore, commanders should require coordination of major PA initiatives with the appropriate country team to ensure the release of consistent information supporting US national interests and command objectives.

ASSESSMENT

[Assessment](#) of PA operations is fundamental to the plan-execute-assess cycle. PA measures of effectiveness should be developed and integrated as a subset of commanders' information [measures of effectiveness](#) used to gauge success in gaining an information advantage. 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 information environment. Accordingly, they should adjust their communication strategies to achieve the commander's desired effects. The component commander's PA staff should consider these factors when building the communication objectives. Objectives should be clear, concise, and attainable—and therefore, measurable. As with all assessment, there should be both near-term and long-range evaluation of success. This assessment folds back into the planning effort to ensure mid-course updates to the plan are properly executed.
