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FOR DOCTRINE DEVELOPMENT AND EDUCATION



ANNEX 3-61 PUBLIC AFFAIRS OPERATIONS

INFORMATION ENVIRONMENT

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As used in this document, the [information environment](#) (IE) is defined as “the aggregate of individuals, organizations, and systems that collect, process, disseminate, or act on information.” The collection, processing, and distribution of information in the IE may directly affect military operations. The public information environment is a substantial subsystem of the IE that includes “all individuals, organizations, or systems that collect, process, and disseminate information for public consumption.” The public information environment is comprised of many subsystems ranging from interpersonal communication to international public information, mass media, social media, and the internet.

The public media and international organizations are a part of the dynamic IE. Although they are not part of the US government or the armed Services, these public information elements can nevertheless directly affect the success or failure of military operations.

Global communication capabilities make news and information simultaneously available from the strategic to the tactical levels of military operations. Communication technologies and the expansion of international media alliances have affected the conduct of military operations in a degree unprecedented to operations before Operation DESERT STORM. In addition, commanders and [public affairs](#) (PA) operators can expect information released for an internal audience to cross-flow into the external media environment and act as a force multiplier for delivering information directly to the public via worldwide web sites, social media, or other means.

Audiences perceive information through the prism of their own national, cultural, political, and regional perspectives. This can substantially alter the reception of the message, especially when the information is of interest to populations of foreign countries.

The modern information environment is characterized by 24-hour media reporting and real-time analysis of events, allowing audiences in the US and throughout the world to receive real-time information from national leaders and from the theater of operations. Add in the proliferation of new media and social media usage and the result is an environment where decision makers may be influenced by an overwhelming amount of information - accurate or inaccurate. The resulting effect may be political pressure on national leaders and military commanders to change strategic goals, policy, guidance, objectives, and procedures that affect military operations.

