



CURTIS E. LEMAY CENTER

FOR DOCTRINE DEVELOPMENT AND EDUCATION



ANNEX 3-61 PUBLIC AFFAIRS OPERATIONS

PA TASKS

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[Public affairs](#) (PA) operations begin at home, before the first [Airman](#) deploys, and continue long after the last Airman is redeployed. PA operations focus on six synergistic tasks to achieve the desired effects of its core [competencies](#). Despite the distinctions among the tasks, PA organizations should be organized for desired effects and not necessarily around these tasks. For instance, there is no longer any real distinction between command information and media operations—communications with these two audiences should be consistent.

The tasks in PA operations are:

- ✦ Command information.
- ✦ Media operations.
- ✦ Community engagement.
- ✦ Visual information.
- ✦ Security review.
- ✦ Communication planning and synchronization.

Command information

Providing timely, accurate, and useful information to Air Force personnel results in informed support for the Air Force mission and degrades the effectiveness of adversary disinformation, [propaganda](#), or deception campaigns. PA operations provide the tools to help commanders respond to concerns of Air Force members and their families, and to enhance Airman morale and readiness. Although [joint task force](#) (JTF) commanders may establish a command information operation within the JTF public affairs structure, Service-specific command information remains the responsibility of the Service component commander.

PA operations inform Airmen, contractors, retirees, and all affiliated family members throughout the Air Force's regular, National Guard, and Reserve components on Air Force operations and issues. This audience should be a high priority in any

communication strategy to ensure maximum combat effectiveness and readiness to deploy and support Air Force operations. Effective command information also delivers the highest sustainable morale, productivity, and retention.

Broadcast and musical operations play important roles with command information. Each employs unique delivery methods to inform and entertain audiences worldwide. These operations enhance Airman morale and can influence foreign decision makers and public audiences as they provide information that demonstrates Air Force readiness, operational capabilities, and resolve to use airpower to achieve operational objectives.

Media operations

PA operations interact with the mass media to provide a flow of information to the public. Wider public awareness occurs when this information reaches national opinion leaders since they may amplify the information in their varied public interactions. Effective media operations bring Air Force issues to the public agenda and help to gain and maintain public support for Air Force operations. Commanders may need to engage local, regional, national, or international media representatives, depending on the operation. Commanders who aggressively use PA operations to gain predictive awareness of the public information environment can often successfully preempt media issues and set the tone and message in the [information environment](#) (IE). Conversely, failure to employ effective media operations can place commanders in a reactive stance, responding to the public debate established by an adversary or questions driving the news media agenda. A reactive posture allows for messages and tones in the national or international media to be set by others, and degrades the effectiveness of PA operations.

Modern technologies tend to blur the lines between command information and media operations in the IE. Commanders and PA operators should be aware that information released for internal audience consumption can quickly enter the external media environment

The flight test area R-2508 at Edwards AFB, home of the Air Force Test Center (AFTC), is 160 miles long by 60 miles wide and contains several communities that regularly complain about the noise from test aircraft. The US Air Force Band of the Golden West, working closely with the AFTC public affairs office, created a series of concerts called "A Different Kind of Air Force Noise," targeting specific communities in the area. The band invited senior Air Force leaders from Edwards to serve as concert sponsors and explain AFTC's mission and its importance to the Air Force. The communities targeted, once responsible for 70 percent of noise complaints received by the base, now comprise only five percent of complaints.

—Multiple Sources

Community engagement

Effective community engagement builds an informed public that is more inclined to be supportive of Air Force operations and initiatives and less susceptible to the effects of adversary misinformation attempts or inaccurate media reports. In many deployed environments, effective community engagement is vital to the success of Air Force operations. Forward-area community engagement in a [contingency](#) will usually fall within the scope of a civil affairs plan (see JP 3-57, [Civil-Military Operations](#)). PA operators must be aware of the civil affairs efforts and, when possible, complement them in PA products and operations. For example, Air Force bands are a strategic engagement tool capable of establishing access to foreign audiences.

In peacetime, active community engagement programs help to build greater acceptance for Air Force operations within US and international audiences. Greater public acceptance of the Air Force can be a key to future operational success since it may lead to basing or overflight rights, shortened community “no-fly” or quiet hours, and other operationally important community support efforts.

Visual information

Strong imagery is a key component of effective communication. Using its photo, video, and graphics visual information (VI) assets, PA ensures Air Force wartime, contingency, and historical and newsworthy events are accurately visually recorded. Commanders at all levels may use this imagery for their communication needs as well as a tool for operational planning and decision making. Other mission-related imagery uses include support to training, battle damage assessment, and public information. Commanders should ensure VI assets are directed to mission-related activities. DoD 5040.6-M-1, *Decision Logic Table Instructions for Recording and Handling Visual Information Material*, should be the source for prioritizing VI requirements. VI also ensures collection and accession of graphics, photographic, or video products through Air Force and DOD channels to the National Archives.

Combat Camera (COMCAM) is a specialized VI capability that provides the Secretary of Defense, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff (CJCS), [combatant commanders](#), and the Air Force with a directed imagery capability in support of operations and planning requirements during worldwide crises, contingencies, exercises, and wartime operations. Air Force COMCAM teams are uniquely trained, equipped, and organized for rapid global deployment to provide documentation of air and ground operations. Fully qualified and equipped for day/night operations, COMCAM units also possess fully certified/qualified aircrew members for missions requiring aerial documentation.

Security review

The security review program directly supports other Air Force information security activities by providing clearance and review of official information for security, accuracy, propriety, and adherence to policy. The intent is not to censor unclassified information—security review helps prevent the inadvertent release of classified material and

information with essential elements of friendly information or technology transfer. Commanders should ensure PA operations are closely integrated with their staffs to minimize delay in providing security review of operational products like imagery, weapons and cockpit video, and other products that demonstrate Air Force capabilities. The security review also promotes consistency in the type of unclassified information released to the public.

During Operation ALLIED FORCE in 1999, the 48th Fighter Wing at RAF Lakenheath deployed two fighter squadrons to Italy. Additionally, combat sorties were flown over Serbia from RAF Lakenheath by a third fighter squadron. This meant around-the-clock operations and night-flying for the base, operational security concerns regarding the base and US children of deployed parents in local British schools, and decreased numbers of American patrons at local businesses. The 48th Fighter Wing commander invited local community leaders to a briefing about RAF Lakenheath's role in the operation and the operation's importance to European stability. The interaction also was an opportunity for community leaders to ask questions and highlight concerns from their constituents. As a result, the community leaders offered their public support for the US and NATO mission and established a lasting relationship with base leaders to address potentially adverse public issues during the operation.

—Multiple Sources

Communication planning and synchronization

PA must take an active role in planning, coordinating and synchronizing public information activities and resources to support the commander's intent, concept of operations and desired end state. Commander's communication synchronization is the process for coordinating and synchronizing themes, messages, images, operations, and actions to support strategic objectives and ensure the integrity and consistency of themes and messages to the lowest tactical level through the integration and synchronization of all relevant communication activities. Communication planning is necessary for all other PA capabilities and tasks. PA operators must gain awareness of the aspects of the total information environment affecting their location or operation. They should also have the means to evaluate and analyze aspects of the IE. PA operators rely on portions of [operation plans](#) (OPLANs), lessons learned and an understanding of the information environment to build plans that help to achieve a commander's desired effects. It is essential to overall mission success that PA is a part of the strategy development and planning phases of an operation to ensure its capabilities are employed to their full effectiveness.

PA operations can play an important role in the transition from combat operations to post-conflict [stability operations](#). Given the fluid nature of military operations, it is likely that aspects of both combat operations and actions typically associated with stability operations will be ongoing at the same time. PA operations can help define public perception of ongoing nation building or other stability operations and are contingent upon the clear and proper articulation of allied objectives. Success will in large part be

determined by the amount and quality of planning efforts for PA operations in preparation for transition between types of operations.
