



CURTIS E. LEMAY CENTER

FOR DOCTRINE DEVELOPMENT AND EDUCATION



ANNEX 3-61 PUBLIC AFFAIRS OPERATIONS

INTEGRATION WITH OPERATIONS

Last Updated: 19 June 2014

Within the [air operations center](#) (AOC), the director of PA is the senior air component public affairs officer (PAO) in the operating area. The PAO is responsible for [planning and executing PA operations](#) to support and create the desired effects necessary to accomplish the commander's operational objectives. PA liaisons may be aligned in the combat information cell (CIC) or the strategy, combat plans, or combat operations divisions of the AOC. These liaisons in the AOC and CIC serve in a planning/deconflicting capacity. Liaisons to AOC divisions/teams coordinate plans with the senior PAO. PA operations are executed by the PA team.

Air Force public affairs Airmen were integrated into the CENTAF (Central Air Forces) AOC at a level never seen before in Operation IRAQI FREEDOM. A PA officer served as full-time liaison to the AOC Strategy and Combat Plans cells for two weeks prior to the initiation of combat. During combat, two PA Airmen served on the AOC floor at all times. These PA officers maintained a constant situational awareness of planned actions and ongoing combat ops and shared that information with Air Force and joint PA Airmen across the theater. This enabled CFACC (combined forces air and space component commander) to anticipate, preempt and effectively mitigate much of the enemy propaganda intended to constrain air operations. PA integration in the AOC also increased accuracy and reduced cycle times for responses to media queries and enhanced PA integration with other information-related capabilities.

—CFACC/PA during Operation IRAQI FREEDOM, 2003

[Information Operations/Non-Kinetic Operations](#) (IO/NKO) teams help integrate IO and NKO activities into joint air component operations plans (see Annex 3-13, [Information Operations](#), and JP 3-13, [Information Operations](#), for detailed discussion of IO/NKO specialty team responsibilities). IO/NKO specialty teams support planning and development of [courses of action](#) (COAs) for operations. They also ensure the [joint force commander's](#) (JFC's) information-related effects and objectives are fully integrated in the [joint air operations plan](#).

The success of a [campaign plan](#) may depend on the information superiority achieved by coordinating and integrating all [information-related capabilities](#) (IRCs) into a seamless effort. The composition of IO/NKO specialty teams may vary based on the overall mission of the force, the role of IO/NKO in accomplishing the JFC's objectives, and the adversary's IRCs.

While PA operations should be closely coordinated with the IO/NKO specialty team, the timely flow of information for release in the public [information environment](#) (IE) should not be impeded if it will have a detrimental effect. PA professionals directly advise the commander and deliver truthful time critical information to meet commanders' desired effects.

During every phase of contingency operations, PA specialists should be represented in the AOC and CIC. The training and experience of PA professionals in dealing with the public and news media make them a key to achieving the commander's objectives related to the public information environment. The PA role in coordinating and deconflicting information is vital because PA personnel are the agents for releasing official information to the public and keeping Air Force audiences informed.

The characteristics of the IE demand synergy between PA operations and the ISR division. The ISR division is the organization within the AOC primarily responsible for battlespace awareness. Battlespace awareness is the result of continuous information gathering and analysis, using a variety of functions. **The synergy between PA operations, which uses open-source information, and operations, which primarily uses classified information, is crucial to gaining and maintaining information dominance.** Close coordination to promptly sanitize and release sensitive information without compromising sources or operations can be highly valuable for countering adversary [propaganda](#), illuminating adversary deception or denial tactics and to highlight US precision, discrimination, and discretion.

During IRAQI FREEDOM, PA planners in the AOC worked with MISO planners to develop news releases about Commando Solo broadcasts and leaflet drops. The PA operations cell released information about MISO efforts to US and international news media as MISO missions were executed, keeping the public informed of MISO as they occurred. This approach preempted the enemy's attempts to counter the MISO missions, as well as keeping the US and international audiences informed of coalition communication efforts directed at enemy forces.

—Multiple Sources

PA operators at any level must be prepared to work in any security environment. PA planners must have the clearances and unescorted access (where permitted) to all elements of the AOC, including intelligence, special access programs (SAPs) or special access requirements (SAR) facilities. PA forces cannot provide trusted counsel to commanders on PA operations without clearances and access to the full operational picture. PA personnel must understand Air Force warfighting organization, concepts, and terminology as well as basic principles of classifying information and foreign

disclosure procedures. Not only does this enable PA operators to properly communicate Air Force information and capabilities, but it increases their usefulness and credibility with the public, commanders, and other Air Force disciplines and functions.
