Rear Detachment Commander

Computer-Based Training

Module 11: Command Information

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1. COMMAND INFORMATION

To enable Rear Detachment Commanders to demonstrate the integration of prerequisite knowledge, skills, and abilities to develop a communication strategy and communicate command information.

1.1. Developing a Communications Strategy
Sources:

FM 3-61.1, *Public Affairs Tactics, Techniques, and Procedures*

FM 3-61 (46-1), *Public Affairs Operations*

1.1.1. Coordinating Media Training – Resources for the RDC

Soldier's Manual task, "Prepare a Spokesman to Address the Media," #224-176-4013

FM 3-61-1 (46-1-1), *Public Affairs Tactics, Techniques and Procedures*, builds on the doctrinal foundation of FM 46-1. It translates the PA fundamentals and principles into detailed guidance for the planning, coordination and execution of PA operations. It provides what is required for the information age -- a sophisticated approach to conducting PA operations. It is the TTP that brings Army Public Affairs into the "information age."

FM 3-61 (46-1), *Public Affairs Operations*, addresses fundamental PA concepts in depth, and provides the linkage between PA and the Army's keystone doctrine, **FM 3-0 (100-5), *Operations***. It recognizes that a refocused, restructured military will conduct operations in an information environment in which detailed, graphic, and live coverage of events are transmitted around the world.

It builds from the understanding that information availability will influence strategic decisions and the direction, range and duration of operations.

FM 3-61 (46-1) also examines PA operations at the different levels of war and across the range of operations. It discusses PA operations with respect to the Principles of War and the Tenets of Army Operations.

It analyzes the PA contributions to build and sustain combat power, defines the PA mission, and establishes strategic PA goals, fundamental PA principles, and underlying considerations for planning integrated information strategies.

PA frequently deals in intangibles -- perceptions and implications -- that are not easily quantifiable or qualifiable, but are essential to commanders. The PA objectives, processes and methods presented in FM 3-61-1 (46-1-1) will assist Army leaders and PA professionals to develop solutions to the complex PA issues they will confront.

1.1.2. Public Affairs Office

Source: FM 3-61.1, Public Affairs Tactics, Techniques, and Procedures, Preface:

The mission of Army Public Affairs (PA) is to fulfill the Army's obligation to keep the American people and the Army informed, and to help establish the conditions that lead to confidence in America's Army and its readiness to conduct operations in peacetime, conflict and war. PA is a critical battlefield function in today's global information environment since every aspect of an Army operation is subject to instantaneous scrutiny.

FM 3-61.1 (46-1-1) sets forth tactics, techniques and procedures (TTPs) for conducting PA operations in accordance with the doctrinal principles contained in FM 3-0 (100-5), *Operations* and FM 3-61 (46-1), *Public Affairs Operations*.

Although this manual is primarily designed to be used by public affairs officers, noncommissioned officers and civilians, it presents TTPs that all leaders conducting operations in the information age should be familiar with.

FM 3-61-1 (46-1-1) is applicable to units and individuals in both the active and reserve components. It serves as a foundation for integrating PA into Army doctrine, training, leader development, organization, materiel, and Soldier initiatives.

In conjunction with the Army Training and Evaluation Program (ARTEP) and other training guidance, it should also be used to plan, integrate and execute individual and collective PA training in units throughout the Army.

With the extremely sophisticated communication technologies of the global information environment (GIE), the nature of media coverage has a significant impact on the conduct of war and stability and support operations at the strategic, operational and tactical levels.

Civilian and military news media coverage influences the perceptions of Soldiers, family members, the public and political leaders, and affects the direction, range and duration of operations. It has a direct relation to the confidence these key audiences have in the Army and its execution of operations.

Effective PA operations are critical to successful Army operations in the information age. They assist the commander in monitoring and understanding public opinion, explaining the situational context of events and communicating the Army's perspective clearly and without filters.

They enable the commander to interpret the perceptions of external and internal audiences and influence the way in which discussion of the operation is framed.

Synchronized, well-planned and actively executed PA tactics, techniques and procedures significantly clear the fog of war and impact the morale and effectiveness of the force.

They reduce distractions, misinformation, uncertainty, confusion and other factors that cause stress and undermine efficient operations. They enhance understanding, acceptance and support.

Effective PA operations contribute to Soldier confidence, discipline, will to win, and unit cohesion.

1.1.3. The Public Affairs Mission

Public Affairs Fundamentals

Public Affairs fulfills the Army's obligation to keep the American people and the Army informed and helps establish the conditions that lead to confidence in America's Army and its readiness to conduct operations in peacetime, conflict and war.

Source: FM 3-61 (46-1), Public Affairs Operations

THE PA MISSION

The American public, internal Army audiences, allies, adversaries and other critical audiences have access to an ever-expanding array of public and military media. Newspapers, magazines, radio, television and electronic media are independent conduits of information. They provide news, analysis, interpretation and commentary and serve as a forum for ideas, opinions and public debate. What appears in the media, both civilian and military, shapes perceptions, attitudes and opinions, and can have a direct impact on mission success.

The vast majority of both civilian and military media representatives are committed to providing responsible, accurate, balanced coverage. Although there are exceptions, most media representatives, even when editorializing, are focused on achieving a credible presentation. To accomplish this, media representatives investigate issues, ask tough, challenging questions, and pursue verifiable answers. They seek information, interpretation and perspective. Army leaders at all levels need to educate media representatives and facilitate their efforts to provide an accurate, balanced and credible presentation of timely information.

Army leaders do this by integrating public affairs into the planning process and synchronizing PA operations with other facets of the operation. Integrating and synchronizing public affairs issues allows commanders to communicate their perspective and achieve a balanced, accurate, credible information presentation.

The PA mission identifies the essential contribution that PA makes to America's Army. The mission and the strategic goals derived from it provide the foundation on which public affairs operations are built. Strategies, which are developed from the perspective that every aspect of every operation could become an issue of interest in the global information environment, are the most successful. Developing such strategies requires that PA personnel access, analyze and anticipate potential issues by conducting a thorough mission analysis.

The challenge for commanders, and personnel supporting them, is to plan and execute operations, which accomplish this mission and support these goals. To do this, PA must be integrated into the planning and decision-making process from receipt of the mission.

The need to integrate and synchronize PA early derives from the fact that in most situations media representatives will be present in an area of operations before the arrival of Army forces. They will know the area of operations and because they are covering the story as it evolves, will have an understanding of, and opinion about, the situation.

Media interest will normally be the most intense at the onset of operations. Media representatives will cover the deployment of Army forces, their arrival in the area and their initial conduct. To support the commander and the force in their interactions with media representatives during these early stages, public affairs personnel should be deployed in the first days, if not hours, of the operation. Dealing with a large international press corps constitutes the most immediate public affairs challenge facing the commander during contingency.

PUBLIC AFFAIRS FORCE

The changing information environment in which the Army conducts war and stability and support operations makes it necessary for PA officers, NCOs and specialists to respond to increasingly complex, demanding challenges. They must be prepared to support the commander with a wide range of knowledge about and understanding of the communication process, the global information environment (GIE) and its potential impact on operations.

PA personnel must also thoroughly understand the fundamentals of Army operations and the strategic context within which the Army conducts operations. As the GIE compresses the strategic, operational and tactical levels of operations, PA personnel need to appreciate the linkage between public opinion, political decision-making and the national security strategy.

They must understand the Army's approach to fighting, influencing events in operations other than war and deterring actions detrimental to national interests.

PA leaders must, therefore, be among the most informed people in the command. They must be thoroughly aware of all aspects of the operation.

They need to know what is being reported about the operation in the global news media and how internal and external audiences are reacting to that information.

The Public Affairs Officer. The PAO's primary mission is to assess the PA situation, advise the commander on PA issues, assist him in making the best possible decisions, and translate his decision into effective PA operations.

PAOs employ the decision-making process to plan, coordinate and supervise the implementation of a PA strategy that helps the commander meet his obligation to communicate with the American public, Soldiers, home station communities and the Department of the Army community. PAOs analyze the situation, anticipate issues, assess implications, and develop comprehensive operations, which meet the news and information needs of internal and external audiences and facilitate media operations.

1.1.4. Media Coverage

Source: Chapter 6, FM 36-1.1, Public Affairs Tactics, Techniques, and Procedures

"You must remember that whether you wear one stripe or six, one bar or silver eagles you automatically become an "Army spokesman" when you are approached by the press. Within 24 hours the words of that Army spokesman can be flashed world wide, particularly if they can be construed as criticism . . .Everything you say should have the ultimate aim of furthering that effort. Your approach to the questions of the press should emphasize the positive aspects of your activities and avoid gratuitous criticism. Emphasize the feeling of achievement, the hopes for the future, instances of outstanding individual or unit performance and optimism in general. But don't destroy your personal credibility by gilding the lily. As songwriter Johnny Mercer put it, "You've got to accentuate the positive and eliminate the negative."

- U.S. Continental Army Command memo to advisers in Vietnam.

The Military and the Media, William M. Hammond, 1988

1.1.5. Principles Of Training

All PA training must be based on the training principles in the FM 25-series:

Use appropriate doctrine. All PA leaders should be familiar with FM 3-0 (100-5), *Operations*; FM 3-13 (100-6), *Information Operations*; and the PA manual, FM 3-61 (46-1), *PA Operations.*

PA TRAINING FOR NON-PA AND PA PERSONNEL

Public affairs training is not limited to training for PA Soldiers. PA elements/Soldiers also have a responsibility to train non-PA Soldiers and family members in military/media relations. Organic PA elements must develop training programs for their supported units. These can take the form of classes as well as pre-deployment briefings for units and family members.

Training for commanders and subject matter experts.

Unit commanders and individual subject matter experts must be prepared to be interviewed. It is a PA responsibility to ensure they are familiar with the ground rules and know to restrict their statements and comments to their area of expertise. Details on how to do this are contained in the **Soldier's Manual task, "Prepare a Spokesman to Address the Media," #224-176-4013.**

Training for unit Soldiers.

Individual Soldiers must be advised of the inevitability of media presence during military operations. Classes for units can be part of sergeant's time training and consist of teaching Soldiers what they should and should not talk about when meeting the press. All Soldiers should be encouraged to represent themselves as Soldiers and encouraged to speak about the jobs they perform for the Army.

Training for family members.

PA training for family members consists of educating them on their rights and responsibilities when interacting with the media. Family members often know more about specific operations than should be revealed to the media. They must be advised not to discuss information, which may be used by the enemy against their spouse's unit, such as details about troop movements, destinations, missions etc. They must also be advised that they have the right to refuse to talk to the media. Family member briefings should be a standard element of pre-deployment family support group activities.

1.1.6. Basic Soldier skills.

Public affairs Soldiers are Soldiers first and public affairs practitioners second. It is imperative they are well trained in basic Soldiering skills. Public affairs elements and units must make time to train to standards on common Soldier tasks that allow them to effectively shoot, move, communicate and survive on the battlefield.

Readiness. All PA elements and units must have, and exercise, detailed load plans. Soldiers should be aware of the importance of maintaining all equipment and vehicles in a state of readiness for deployment.

PA NCOs must ensure Soldiers participate in preparations for overseas movement (POM) so they are administratively and medically prepared for worldwide deployment. Soldiers should be aware of the importance of wills, shots, powers-of-attorney, personal data and allotments.

1.1.7. Staff Section and Unit Training.

A state of operational readiness to conduct combat or non-combat operations must be attained and maintained. This level of readiness is accomplished by preparing individuals, shifts and staff sections to perform assigned tasks and other duties at the desired standard of proficiency in advance of assigned operations.

Standards of performance must be set so the section can evaluate its performance. Examples of these standards include:

- Understanding DOD's policy statement -- Commanders will ensure maximum unrestricted disclosures of unclassified information to news media representatives consistent with operational security, guidance from higher headquarters and the privacy of individuals concerned.

- Escorted and unescorted media -- If the media has a PA escort, you may agree to an interview after the escort explains some basic ground rules. If not escorted, ask media personnel to accompany you to the command post, NCOIC or OIC and contact higher headquarters/public affairs officer.

- Conducting an interview -- Military personnel have the right to deny media interviews. If a Soldier elects to provide the media with an interview, he should only discuss those things which he has direct responsibility or personal knowledge, and ensure an escort (PA or non-PA) is present. See Appendix N **[in FM 3-61-1 (46-1-1]** for more details.

1.1.8. Interview Process

Prepare for the interview. Consider the type of questions the media will ask, and think what your answer will be. When possible, ask for PA assistance (UPAR or PA personnel).

Relax and be yourself. Imagine that the reporter is someone you know and talk with him in a relaxed manner.

If cameras are present, ignore them and talk directly to the reporter. Be brief and concise. Remember, a TV news story will use only 10- to 15-second answers.

If you need time to respond, ask the reporter to restate the question. A simple pause before answering the question is sufficient.

Use simple language and avoid military jargon (i.e., military abbreviations or acronyms). If you must use military terms, explain what they mean.

Use appropriate posture and gestures. Relax and be yourself.

Answer only one question at a time. If asked multiple questions, answer the most important one first, or answer the one you're most comfortable with.

Always try to end your comments on a positive point. This is your opportunity to tell your unit's story.

1.1.9. Things not to do:

Do not allow media to videotape recognizable landmarks nearby, sensitive equipment, interior of tactical operations centers or other sensitive areas. Use OPSEC as guide on this matter.

Do not answer speculative questions or give opinions concerning real or hypothetical ("what if") situations.

Do not use the expression, "No comment." A more appropriate comment would be, "We don't comment on future operations." Or "I'm not qualified to respond to your question." or "That information is classified, so I can't discuss it."

Never lie to the media.

Consider everything you say to the media as "on the record." *Never* make "off the record" comments.

Don't lose your temper when media representatives ask questions you consider inappropriate or foolish. Such questions are usually rooted in ignorance rather than in malice.

Do not discuss operational capabilities, exact numbers or troop strengths, numbers/types of casualties, type of weapons systems or future plans. Use general terms like approximate, light, moderate or heavy.

Don't repeat a negative phrase in response to a media representative's negative question (e.g., Q: Since your unit is poorly trained, can you really deploy? A: We're well trained and ready to go.).

Staff section and unit training should be integrated into headquarters FTXs and CPXs in order to perform adequately within the unit's operational staff during real-world missions.

1.1.10. *Safeguarding Personal Information*

Source: Appendix R, FM 36-1.1, Public Affairs Tactics, Techniques, and Procedures

PRIVACY ACT/FREEDOM OF INFORMATION ACT

INTRODUCTION

This checklist addresses personal information about Soldiers and any living persons that can or cannot be released under the provisions of the privacy act.

CHECKLIST ITEMS

AGE (date of birth) = releasable. This information is public record.

HOME OF RECORD/PRESENT ADDRESS = In most cases, home of record can be released if no street address is given. There is no general rule for disclosure of this information. Widely different circumstances surround each incident, and judgment is made on a case-by-case basis. In most cases, the person's present geographical location may be provided (city, state), but not the street address. In each case, the desires of the actual person or next of kin should be considered.

MARITAL STATUS/DEPENDENTS = RELEASABLE. This information is public record, including names, ages and sex of dependents.

AWARDS/DECORATIONS/CITATIONS = releasable.

EDUCATION/SCHOOLING/SPECIALTY = releasable. Major area of study, school, year of graduation, degree and specialty designator is releasable.

RACE = in most cases, NOT releasable. However, where the fact of an individual's race is relevant in providing essential facts to the Press, it may be released (such as in a racially oriented protest or altercation.)

CHARACTER OF DISCHARGE:

ADMINISTRATIVE = NOT releasable, unless the individual provides his written consent.

PUNITIVE = releasable. This includes discharges resulting from courts martial.

DUTY STATUS = releasable.

PERSONNEL BOARDS:

Results of promotion boards and augmentation boards are releasable.

Results of administrative discharge boards and aviator flight boards are NOT releasable.

PHOTOGRAPHS IN THE CUSTODY OF THE DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE = releasable, unless they warrant an invasion of anyone's personal privacy.

1.2. Communicating Command Information

Sources:

AR 600-8-1, Army Casualty Operations/Assistance/Insurance

Communication of information

As the Rear Detachment Commander, you will be called upon to communicate with various people in a variety of settings.

Communicating Casualty Information

According to AR 600-8-1:

1.2.1. Casualty reporting policy

    a. Department of the Army policy concerning casualty reporting requires that casualty reporting occur in a timely and accurate manner as it serves as the basis of providing casualty information concerning the incident to the NOK.

    b. CAC's will ensure that procedures are in place to --

        1 Maintain an organizational capability to provide for individual casualty reporting and recording.

        2 Establish internal controls to ensure the accuracy of casualty information.

        3 Certify the validity of casualty information.

        4 Ensure that required casualty information is provided within the time constraints prescribed in this regulation.

    c. To comply with the casualty reporting policies described above, procedures outlined in this regulation [AR 600-8-1] will be strictly adhered to.

The RDC should be familiar with AR 600-8-1.

1.2.2. Communicating community event information

Many unit families will depend on information from the unit (FRG and RDC) about community events. Utilizing a variety of communication methods is the best way to

ensure that your unit families are receiving this information. Options include, but are not limited to:

> newsletters
>
> email updates
>
> briefings
>
> meetings
>
> telephone roster
>
> virtual Family Readiness Group site
>
> flyers/PR

1.2.3. Communicating deployment information

When discussing deployment-related information, remember that you are speaking on behalf of your unit. If you don't know the answer to a question, it is permissible to say, "I don't know the answer to that, but I will find out and get back to you." Then, it is vital that you research the answer to the question and respond back in a timely manner.

Setting up regularly scheduled meetings is a good way to keep families informed. Advertise the meetings to all family members and keep remote or inactive families informed through mail, email, or telephone.

Attend ALL FRG meetings. For many families, seeing someone in an Army uniform makes a positive difference in how they react to information from the unit.

Tips for communicating with unit families:

> Be honest in all responses. If you don't know, say you don't know.
>
> Follow up all questions/concerns in a timely manner.
>
> Flood your unit families with information. Utilize a variety of methods and communicate often.
>
> Utilize the virtual Family Readiness Group page (www.armyfrg.org) to answer questions, disseminate information, and keep in touch with unit families.
>
> Remember that deployment can be an extremely stressful time for families. Be patient with all family members.
>
> Use official Army terminology, but be sure to explain all terms in 'civilian' language. Don't assume your families will know acronyms and other terms.
>
> Keep in constant communication with the forward command. Write down questions, notes, situations, etc. and discuss as needed.
>
> Be timely in your responses to family members. Panic, fear, and anger can easily start to build when a family member feels neglected by the unit during deployment.

1.2.4. Safeguarding personal information

As the RDC, you serve as a conduit of official information and a safeguard of personal information. Be sure to follow all OPSEC and PRIVACY ACT guidelines when dealing with families. NEVER discuss a family's situation outside of your work requirements. Nothing

will destroy your credibility faster than having a family member overhear you talking about a sensitive situation in an unofficial capacity.

1.2.5. Utilizing PAO Support

Now that you are aware of the PAO mission and guidelines, utilizing PAO support will be instrumental in communicating with your unit.

Providing input to PAO

> Keep in constant communication with your PAO. Work together to disseminate information, support the unit, and serve the families of your Soldiers.

Utilizing PAO support

> Utilize the PAO's ability to support the unit in casualty assistances, SIRs, good news, etc. Teamwork will ensure that your unit is well-informed and that you are meeting the needs of your unit families.

1.3. Key points from COORDINATING MEDIA TRAINING:

The RDC is responsible for coordinating media training.

There are positive and negative ramifications of media coverage. As the RDC, ensure that you are knowledgeable about the PAO, media training, and media interviews. When you speak to the media, you speak on behalf of your entire unit.

Safeguard sensitive and personal information.

Key points from COMMUNICATING COMMAND INFORMATION:

The RDC should be familiar with AR 600-8-1.

Remember the Tips for Communicating with Unit Families.

Utilize the unit PAO in communicating with the unit families.