REPORT DOCUMENTATION PAGE		*Form Approved* OMB No. 0704-0188

Public reporting burden for this collection of information is estimated to average 1 hour per response, including the time for reviewing instructions, searching existing data sources, gathering and maintaining the data needed, and completing and reviewing this collection of information. Send comments regarding this burden estimate or any other aspect of this collection of information, including suggestions for reducing this burden to Department of Defense, Washington Headquarters Services, Directorate for Information Operations and Reports (0704-0188), 1215 Jefferson Davis Highway, Suite 1204, Arlington, VA 22202-4302. Respondents should be aware that notwithstanding any other provision of law, no person shall be subject to any penalty for failing to comply with a collection of information if it does not display a currently valid OMB control number. **PLEASE DO NOT RETURN YOUR FORM TO THE ABOVE ADDRESS.**

1. REPORT DATE *(DD-MM-YYYY)* 13-02-2006	2. REPORT TYPE FINAL	3. DATES COVERED *(From - To)*
4. TITLE AND SUBTITLE **Government Affairs: Maintaining American Public Support** **for Military Operations**		**5a. CONTRACT NUMBER**
		5b. GRANT NUMBER
		5c. PROGRAM ELEMENT NUMBER
6. AUTHOR(S) **LT Brian Turney** Paper Advisor (if Any): **LTC Derrill Goldizen**		**5d. PROJECT NUMBER**
		5e. TASK NUMBER
		5f. WORK UNIT NUMBER
7. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES) Joint Military Operations Department Naval War College 686 Cushing Road Newport, RI 02841-1207		**8. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION REPORT NUMBER**
9. SPONSORING/MONITORING AGENCY NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES)		**10. SPONSOR/MONITOR'S ACRONYM(S)**
		11. SPONSOR/MONITOR'S REPORT NUMBER(S)

12. DISTRIBUTION / AVAILABILITY STATEMENT
Distribution Statement A: Approved for public release; Distribution is unlimited.

13. SUPPLEMENTARY NOTES A paper submitted to the faculty of the NWC in partial satisfaction of the requirements of the JMO Department. The contents of this paper reflect my own personal views and are not necessarily endorsed by the NWC or the Department of the Navy.

14. ABSTRACT

Maintaining domestic public support is crucial for the success of any military operation that becomes even slightly prolonged. Although much research has been done into what factors cause a loss of public opinion, little has been done into how the U.S. military can act to sustain public support for its operations. One method that could be successful is through the creation of a Government Affairs organization within the Joint Commander's Headquarters Staff. Through an actively planned engagement process, Government Affairs can help influence members of Congress to a favorable view of the progress of an operation. In turn, this will have a positive affect on the formation of public support for the operation. The result will be an environment that will more likely allow the U.S. military to complete its mission successfully.

15. SUBJECT TERMS
Government Affairs; Public Support; Public Opinion

16. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF:			17. LIMITATION OF ABSTRACT	18. NUMBER OF PAGES	19a. NAME OF RESPONSIBLE PERSON Chairman, JMO Dept
a. REPORT UNCLASSIFIED	**b. ABSTRACT** UNCLASSIFIED	**c. THIS PAGE** UNCLASSIFIED		18	**19b. TELEPHONE NUMBER** *(include area code)* 401-841-3556

Standard Form 298 (Rev. 8-98)

NAVAL WAR COLLEGE
Newport, RI

Government Affairs: Maintaining American Public Support For Military Operations

By

Brian Turney
LT USN

A paper submitted to the faculty of the Naval War College in partial satisfaction of the requirements of the Department of Joint Military Operations.

The contents of this paper reflect my own personal views and are not necessarily endorsed by the Naval War College or the Department of the Navy.

Signature: _____

13 Feb 2006

_____
Faculty Advisor
Name, if applicable

Abstract

Maintaining domestic public support is crucial for the success of any military operation that becomes even slightly prolonged. Although much research has been done into what factors cause a loss of public opinion, little has been done into how the U.S. military can act to sustain public support for its operations. One method that could be successful is through the creation of a Government Affairs organization within the Joint Commander's Headquarters Staff. Through an actively planned engagement process, Government Affairs can help influence members of Congress to a favorable view of the progress of an operation. In turn, this will have a positive affect on the formation of public support for the operation. The result will be an environment that will more likely allow the U.S. military to complete its mission successfully.

Table of Contents

INTRODUCTION

"No American program, no plan for world order, can succeed unless it has the full support of public opinion, both at home and abroad. At home, there are large areas of ignorance and prejudice about foreign affairs and abroad there are large segments of misinformation and suspicion about us. Unless we can educate public opinion at home, we shall not be impelled to do the job in foreign policy that needs to be done. Unless we make ourselves understood abroad, no matter how good our intentions, we shall fail. A better informed opinion is vital to us."

Lester Markel[1]

In a democratic society, the ability of the government to carry out its policies hinges upon public support. This applies to the use of the military as much as for any other aspect of government. The issue of public support has been especially crucial for the U.S. military since World War II. Public opinion polling data shows that public support has dropped over the course of any operation that has been even slightly prolonged.[2] While a loss of public support for a military operation does not automatically mean that the operation will be a failure, it does increase the chances that military forces will be withdrawn before all objectives have been met. For this reason, it is vital for the military to look closely to see what can be done to maintain public support.

Interestingly, a loss of public support does not necessarily mean that the public desires an immediate end to the operation. Data from World War II, Korea, and Vietnam shows that there was at least some desire for escalation felt among those who did not support those wars.[3] However, the manner in which the loss of support manifests is immaterial. As support falters, the government, specifically the President, encounters more opposition to its agenda. This results in a greater possibility that the administration will terminate the

---

[1] Lester Markel, Public Opinion and Foreign Policy (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1949), p. 1
[2] Eric Larson and Bogdan Savych, American Public Support for U.S. Military Operations from Mogadishu to Baghdad, (Santa Monica, CA: RAND, 2005), p. 225 Fig A.1
[3] Benjamin C. Schwarz, Casualties, Public Opinion, and U.S. Military Intervention, (Santa Monica, CA: RAND, 1994), pp. 5,23

1

operation before a successful conclusion is reached, in order to relieve domestic pressure. As

one researcher noted, President Truman was able to continue prosecuting the Korean War

only at the expense of his presidency.[4] This means that a loss of public support in any form

is a direct threat to the military's ability to complete any operation successfully.

The main question is whether there is anything that the military can do to maintain

support for its operations. The logical place to start looking for an answer is to examine what

factors actually affect public support. As one researcher noted, "Policy makers who are

mindful of the premises under which support has been given for a particular U.S. military

operation will often be able to build and sustain a permissive environment for the conclusion

of the operation."[5] Next, it is useful to look at the mechanics of how public opinion changes.

By looking at this, we may determine any key communication mechanisms that would help

in our quest to maintain support. After closely examining these topics, it can be seen that the

option likely to have the greatest effect on maintenance of public support is increasing the

effectiveness of liaison between the operational commander and the government, especially

members of Congress. One option to do this would be through the creation of a Government

Affairs function within the joint staff framework.

FACTORS AFFECTING PUBLIC OPINION

When looking at factors that negatively affect public opinion, conventional wisdom

points to casualties as a primary mover. Operation Desert Storm had the highest public

support in recent memory, while having an extremely low number of casualties. Contrasted

to this are situations such as the Vietnam and Korean Wars. Benjamin Schwarz notes that

"when, in July 1965, the United States committed ground troops to Vietnam, 62 percent of

---

[4] Eric Larson, <u>Casualties and Consensus: The Historical Role of Casualties in Domestic Support for U.S. Military </u>Operations, (Santa Monica, CA: RAND, 1996), p. 59
[5] Ibid., p. 102

those polled by the Gallup Organization 'approved' of the decision to intervene . . . . By April 1966, the United States had suffered nearly 20,000 casualties, 'approval' had dropped to 47 percent . . . . By March 1968 . . . with 150,000 cumulative U.S. casualties and with 'approval' of the war down to 40 percent . . . ."[6] Schwarz also notes a similar decline in public support during the Korean War.[7]

However, it would be a mistake to believe that casualties represent the whole, or even the majority, of the picture. To illustrate this point, look at support for the current war in Iraq. Having recently reached the level of 2,000 casualties, support for the war stands at approximately 47%.[8] Comparatively, support for the Vietnam War stood at approximately 70% when reaching 2000 casualties, and support for the Korean War was about 70% with about 10,000 casualties.[9] From this, it is evident that other factors also play a major role in determining public support.

There is not a complete, agreed upon list of what these other factors may entail. Schwarz supports the notion that apparent success will buoy support, looking at the Civil War.[10] Eric Larson has performed the most comprehensive research in this area recently. In his work, Larson concludes that the factors affecting public support can be broken down into five basic areas: perceived benefits, prospects for success, prospective and actual costs, changing expectations [during the course of the operation], and the nature and depth of support among other actors, including political leadership.[11] As Larson puts it, "Both

---

[6] Schwarz, pp. 10-11
[7] Ibid., p. 10
[8] Derived from a Gallup Organization poll from 6-8 Jan 2006, asking "If you had to choose, which do you think is better for the U.S. – to set a timetable for removing troops from Iraq and remove them regardless of whether U.S. goals are achieved by that time [or] to keep a significant number of troops in Iraq until the U.S. achieves its goals there, regardless of how long that takes."
[9] Larson, Casualties and Consensus, p. xvii Fig. S.1
[10] Schwarz, p. 5, footnote 3
[11] Larson, Casualties and Consensus, pp. 10-12

expected and actual casualties can affect support for a military intervention, although the impact of casualties in support depends upon the perceived benefits, prospects, and nature of leadership support. When perceived benefits or prospects are low, or leaders are divided, support will be lower."[12] As Larson also states, "The perceived recent decline in willingness to accept casualties may have to do with the arguably small stakes in the Post-Cold War world."[13] This comment could explain the results of the comparison between the Korean, Vietnam and Gulf Wars.

Larson's framework is supported by the research of Carl Graham. Graham's analysis of factors affecting public support focuses on three changeable "sliding factors" - fear of escalation, global/regional reaction, and liberal values.[14] While these factors do provide a different view of how public opinion changes, they are essentially just different interpretations of the same factors that Larson discusses.

In the end, the best analysis of what factors affect public support can be summed up in Larson's statement: "The simplest explanation . . . is that support for U.S. military operations and the willingness to tolerate casualties are based upon a sensible weighing of the benefits and the costs that is influenced heavily by consensus (or its absence) among political leaders."[15] This consensus among political leaders is something that the military may be able to influence to its advantage.

MECHANICS OF CHANGING PUBLIC OPINION

Turning to the subject of *how* public opinion changes, Larson again provides a framework from which to start. He describes an iterative model, which he calls the

---

[12] Eric Larson, <u>Ends and Means in the Democratic Conversation</u>, (Santa Monica, CA: RAND 1996), p. xix
[13] Ibid., p. xix
[14] Carl Royce Graham, <u>A Democratic Call to Arms: Public Opinion and Intervention </u>Policy, (Monterey, CA: Naval Postgraduate School, June 1991), p 7
[15] Larson, <u>Casualties and Consensus</u>, p. xv

"democratic conversation." This conversation starts with the government, specifically the President, deciding that a military operation is necessary and explaining to public audiences why he came to this conclusion. Other political leaders decide if they support this policy and make their decisions known to the public. During this period, the media acts as the conduit between the political leaders and the public. In doing so, the media shapes the conversation somewhat by determining the level and type of coverage provided. The public receives the message from the media and forms their opinion on the matter. This process becomes iterative as the operation goes on, in response to changing situations and events.[16] There are two key points to note about this "democratic conversation." The first is that it implies a top down model for the flow of opinion. In other words, it is the opinions of the political leaders that drive the opinion of the mass public, not vice versa. The second is that the media plays a key role in shaping this conversation. These points should receive considerable attention when looking at how best to maintain public support during military operations.

The top-down model of the flow of public opinion may not necessarily make complete sense in a democratic society, where the leaders are almost continuously looking to the people for cues to guide their choices. However, as both Larson and John Zaller assert, there is empirical evidence to support this view.[17] As Larson notes, "Members of the public . . . develop opinions on military operations based on selective attention to pro and con arguments in the elite debates reported by the media or as a result of conversations with associates."[18] Acting upon this model provides some options for the Combatant Commander to help maintain public support. If, as the top-down model indicates, political leaders are a

---

[16] Larson, <u>End and Means</u>, p. 55-56
[17] Larson, <u>Ends and Means</u>, p. 267; W. Lance Bennet and David L. Paletz, eds, <u>Taken By Storm: The Media, Public Opinion, and U.S. Foreign Policy in the Gulf </u>War, (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1994), p. 186
[18] Larson and Savych, p. 26

driving force in changing public opinion, then it may be more effective to influence the opinion of a relatively small number of key political leaders as opposed to the opinion of the mass public directly.

According to this model, "Leadership consensus or dissensus is an essential element in the character of public support for U.S. military interventions and . . . leadership divisions tend to cue divisions among the public in a predictable way."[19] Larson further argues that "the consequences of [the] deep disagreements among U.S. leaders are . . . divisions in the public, and support that is quite brittle and easily exploited by adversaries, thereby leading both to failed interventions and to incorrect 'lessons'."[20] Thus, in order to help maintain public support for military operations, the military must engage more effectively with those political leaders most likely to disagree with the operation. Through a continuous, rational discourse, it is possible that disagreements among the political leaders can be resolved, both as the operation is initiated, and later, when unexpected occurrences may tend to shake support.

The other major area that may be open to influence in shifting mass public opinion is the media. As previously mentioned, the media plays a major part in shaping the conversation between the government and the public. It decides how extensive coverage of an issue will be, it decides to what extent differing opinions will be broadcast, and it can provide an overall 'tone' to an operation that can be either positive or negative. In this role, the media may be an invaluable asset in maintaining public support.

The role of the media in helping to shape public opinion is well documented. As Larson notes, "The model of how mass public attitude changes that has gained the widest

---

[19] Larson, Casualties and Consensus, p. xx
[20] Larson, Ends and Means, p. xxi

public acceptance . . . is referred to as the leadership centered model . . . . Put in words, the probability of an attitude change is the probability of receiving a message times the probability of accepting it, given reception."[21] In this formula, the media plays a direct role in the probability of a message being received. Additional data supporting this argument can be seen in a correlation between the numbers of stories appearing in the New York Times compared to the percentage of the public who appear to be closely following the issue.[22] This effect is becoming more and more apparent as new technology gives the media a better ability to bring the news directly from the battlefront to the home.[23]

The media may be an invaluable asset in maintaining public support. However, the military must tread lightly in trying to use the media, because of the dangers presented by the same media. The journalistic profession has a character and a mission that are quite separate from those of the military. The media holds two primary goals: to act as a witness to the actions of the government for the people and to gain market share in order to remain solvent as a business.[24] In order to better achieve both of these goals, the media believes that credibility is a paramount characteristic in its profession.[25] Added to this, the media culture promotes a significant amount of self reflection, and self criticism if journalistic standards are perceived as not being met.[26]

The result of this combination of traits and goals is that the military must be extremely open, and extremely careful, when working with the media in an attempt to shape a message actively. If the media concludes that their standards are being compromised in

---

[21] Larson, Ends and Means, pp. 267-268
[22] Christopher Paul and James J. Kim, Reporters on the Battlefied: The Embedded Press System in the Historical Context, (Santa Monica, CA: RAND, 2004), pp. 30-31
[23] Ibid., pp. 13-14
[24] Ibid., p. 9
[25] Ibid., p. 17
[26] Ibid., p. 12

any way, then that compromise will become a major story, most likely to the detriment of public support for the military.

To summarize, public opinion shifts as a function of the chance that a message is received and the chance of the message being accepted once it is received. The chance of receiving a message is primarily a function of the media, and its choice on how extensively an issue is covered. The chance that a message is accepted is driven primarily by how well the person receiving the message identifies with the originator. A dissensus amongst political leaders will mostly affect those people who identify with the leaders, driven fairly strongly along party lines. This dissensus can only affect the public if it is received by them, primarily through the media.

RECOMMENDATIONS

To this point, we have examined both what factors will actually affect public opinion and by what mechanisms public opinion changes. Public opinion changes based on a calculation of costs and benefits, modified by the chances of success, as well as the amount of consensus or dissensus that exists in the political leadership.[27] The factors from this calculation will cause a change based on the chances that they are received by the public and that they are internalized once they are received.[28] The chance of receiving the message is dependent largely upon the media coverage provided to the issue, which is driven by the degree to which political leaders make their disagreement public.[29] Internalizing the message is largely influenced by similar beliefs existing in both the leader originating the message and the person receiving it, something which correlates somewhat with political affiliation.[30]

---

[27] Larson, Casualties and Consensus, pp. 10-12
[28] Larson, Ends and Means, pp. 267-268
[29] Bennet and Paletz, eds, pp. 28-29
[30] Larson, Ends and Means, p. 68

Based on the mechanisms described above, the two key areas that could be used to influence public opinion are the government and the media. The amount of dissensus within the government is a factor in Larson's "rational calculus" as well as a factor in determining the chance that a person will internalize a message that they receive from the media or associates. The media is the major factor in transmitting messages to the public, hence it plays a major role in affecting public opinion. The U.S. military has a Public Affairs (PA) function that exists to help with the second factor, but does not have a developed function whose goal is to influence members of the U.S. government, specifically the members of both houses of Congress, favorably. This need should be addressed.

During the course of any operation, it is inevitable that dissensus will begin to form. Referencing the leadership-centered model of how public opinion changes, it is likely that this dissensus will originate in the government opposition party. Some of these leaders will oppose a military operation based solely on an ideological belief that the use of force is never the correct option to choose. In today's increasingly partisan environment, some leaders will oppose a military action simply because it was proposed by a member of the opposite party. However, the majority of the opposition probably does so based on the "sensible weighing" of Larson's framework. This opposition represents a critical vulnerability in sustaining public opinion that can be addressed by the Combatant Commander.

The percentage of Senators and Congressmen who have served in the military has dropped consistently in recent years, from almost 80% following the Vietnam War to less than 30% today.[31] This leaves those in power less familiar with military theory and capabilities than in years past. By interacting with these leaders on a regular basis, the combatant commands can help educate them on capabilities, plans, and other factors that

---

[31] Bryan Bender, "Veterans Take on New Battle: Run for Office", *The Boston Globe*, Nov 27, 2005

9

affect a military operation in order to affect their rational calculus determining support or opposition for the operation favorably.

The U.S. military currently does not have a robust, formalized method for interacting with members of Congress on a repetitive basis. A review of the hearing schedule for the Senate Armed Services Committee (SASC) shows that the interaction between the SASC and the Combatant Commanders since 1999 has been limited at best.[32] Each Combatant Commander briefs the SASC annually in support of the Defense Authorization Request for the upcoming fiscal year. Except for that brief, there does not appear to be much interaction in support of military operations. To look at the current war in Iraq, it appears as though the CENTCOM commander has met with the SASC to discuss operations in Iraq three times, not counting times he appeared to discuss the Abu Ghraib scandal.[33] If this level of interaction were taken as representative of the interaction between the Combatant Commanders and houses of Congress as whole, then it leads to the conclusion that there is much room for improvement in this area.

The example above discusses formal testimony by the Combatant Commander to the Congressional committees. It does not speak to interactions on a more individual level. It is much harder to do solid research into this area, but several things can be deduced. Given that there are collectively 535 members of the House of Representatives and the Senate, it is hard to imagine that interaction occurs on an individual level between the Combatant Commander and individual members of Congress with any regular frequency. Instead, such interaction would occur through members of the Combatant Commander's staff. While the Combatant

---

[32] http://armed-services.senate.gov/hearings.cfm
[33] http://armed-services.senate.gov/hearings.cfm, looking at hearing schedule from 2003 through present

Commanders do maintain a Legislative Liaison Office in Washington D.C., it is not clear that these offices are manned in order to most effectively interact with the members of Congress.

Given the potential benefits of maintaining a close liaison with Congress, what would make the most sense is to establish a Government Affairs (GA) section of the joint force commander's headquarters staff. GA would have the responsibility of planning and managing the command's engagement with Congressional members in order to discuss ongoing operations with them, in the hopes of better informing members of Congress as to the true costs, benefits and chances of success in the military action. As a model for how to organize an overall GA program, look to the Coast Guard.

The Coast Guard has an established Government Affairs function to help outreach with congressional and local leaders to improve relations in those areas. In the Coast Guard model, there are three levels of the Government Affairs.[34] There is an overall Commandant for Government Affairs, with his staff centered in Washington D.C. This center will maintain liaison with all national leaders during the time that they are in the capitol, regardless of where they are coming from. The next tier down is the Geographic Area (Pacific Area and Atlantic Area) commands, who work between the overall Government Affairs and the District Government Affairs cells. The district level, the lowest of the three branches in the Coast Guard model, is responsible for maintaining liaison with congressional leaders while they are in their home districts, as well as all other local government officials. This liaison allows the Coast Guard to get their mission out to the Congressional leaders and helps to publicize their cause with them.

---

[34] This information is based on discussion with USCG personnel who have served in the Government Affairs office. No written instruction could be found documenting the organization of USCG Government Affairs.

This model can translate over to the joint force commander's staff with a few modifications. GA staffs should be established at each Combatant Command and whenever a Joint/Combined Task Force is established. These staffs would have the responsibility for incorporating the engagement with members of Congress into the Campaign Plans developed by the Combatant Commander's staff or the Joint Task Force Commander's staff. Their efforts would focus on integrating visits by members of Congress to the Area of Responsibility (AOR)/Joint Operating Area (JOA), as well as coordinating information on current or proposed operations to be provided to members of Congress. Additionally, the GA staff could coordinate meetings between the members of Congress or their senior staff and senior members of the Combatant or Joint Task Force Commander's staff. This engagement would be with the members of the House and Senate Armed Services Committees at a minimum, and ideally as much of Congress as possible.

A quick review of Joint Doctrine shows that there is very little planning when it comes to visits by members of Congress. Thus, this planning occurs reactively after an operation has commenced. As a result, what visits occur may do so at a time which is not the most effective from the viewpoint of being able to show the full breadth of what is being accomplished in the AOR/JOA. By planning ahead, and identifying times and places where there would be more to show to a visiting member of Congress, the effectiveness of these trips could be greatly increased. The same process applies to getting information back to members of Congress in Washington D.C.

The GA staffs, in order to achieve maximum effectiveness, would interact primarily with two already existing functions. Each Combatant Commander maintains a Legislative Liaison Office in Washington D.C. The primary function of these offices is to answer

questions asked by members of Congress and preparing personnel who have come from the

AOR to Washington D.C. for meetings with Congress. These offices, if sufficiently manned

can become a conduit for the GA cell to deliver information to and retrieve facts from

Washington D.C. The Legislative Liaison offices would be able to deliver information,

possibly in the form of briefs, provided by the GA cell to the members of Congress.

Additionally, the Legislative Liaisons could track the schedules of the members of Congress

and help provide input on who would be available when to visit the AOR/JOA.

Additionally, the GA cell would have to work closely with Public Affairs (PA).

Although PA does not have a mission directly related to engaging with members of

Congress, close coordination between the GA and PA staffs should help both communities

better complete their core missions.[35] The three core PA functions are news media relations,

internal/command information, and community relations. Crucial to these functions is

ensuring all information that may become available to public audiences is accurate, and does

not contradict other information. Thus, GA and PA would need to work closely to ensure

that the information provided is accurate, and does not contradict information that is made

available to other sources. The Joint Doctrine for Public Affairs notes, "Successful relations

between the military and the news media . . . are based upon credibility and trust."[36] This

statement is no less true when working with members of Congress, and the one of the

quickest ways to lose credibility is to provide conflicting information. Additionally,

information that is provided to members of Congress may make their way to the news media.

This makes it doubly important, from the PA perspective, that the information that the GA

staff is using is coordinated with PA.

---

[35] Joint Publication System, Joint Publication (JP) 3-61: Doctrine for Public Affairs in Joint Operations, pp. III-3 to III-7
[36] Ibid., p. vi

COUNTERARGUEMENTS

It could be argued the Combatant Commander already has tools at his disposal to affect public opinion, and that it would be more effective to improve their use than to create a completely new function within a joint staff. Additionally, there is the problem of deconflicting the Government Affairs mission with that of other, already established functions, such as Public Affairs or various Legislative Liaison programs, to prevent duplication of effort. Instead, the combatant commander could sharpen the use of PA and IO tools already available to him, such as Combat Camera, hometown news, and existing relationships with the domestic media, to present an accurate picture of the operation to the public as a whole. Through this presentation, the rational calculus discussed in this paper could be favorably influenced to maintain public support.

While it is true that there are problems inherent to establishing a new function in any organization, the problems in this case are not as great as they may appear on the surface. The issue of deconflicting the GA mission with existing programs would be fairly easy to solve. Public Affairs, especially at the Combatant Commander level and below, does not have any function directly related to informing the other branches of the United States Government.[37] However, the new GA branch should work closely with the Public Affairs office to ensure that the message that GA is presenting is consistent with messages from other organizations within the command.

As discussed previously, some changes will need to be made to the Combatant Commander's Legislative Liaison program. Due to the additional missions that these programs gain, additional staffing will probably be required. Additionally, some standardization of the experience level in these programs across all the Combatant

---

[37] Ibid., pp. III-3 - III-5

Commands could prove useful. The seniority of the leaders of these programs should be sufficient to give credibility in dealings with the staffs of members of Congress. Finally, it might prove beneficial to provide some standardized instructions for these offices to work under, so that they are working form a common ground. No such instruction currently exists. The Legislative Liaison offices working for the Services and the Joint Chiefs of Staff should remain relatively unaffected by implementing this program. Overall, the impact on the Legislative Liaison programs should be minimal.

When looking at the argument that the Combatant Commander should utilize PA and IO tools at his disposal, the reality is that there may not be much benefit left to be gained from this area. As discussed earlier, great care must be taken when trying to actively shape a message to the public through the media. However, that does not mean that the media is useless to the military in this regard. While actively shaping a message can quickly become problematic, getting out information should not. In the absence of other considerations, the media has an incentive to try to present all sides of a news story, especially to meet their primary goal of acting as a witness for the public.[38] This can be used by the military to present the positive side of the situation in the AOR/JOA to the American public. However, the other primary goal of the media does have somewhat of a detracting effect. Profits are driven by market share, and market share is often driven by who can present the biggest scoop. This leads to a media organization that often looks for the scandal and the bad news to improve market share.[39]

This tendency to the negative on the part of the media means that more passive approaches to media relations are not likely to provide much additional positive influence on

---

[38] Paul and Kim, p. 11
[39] Ibid., pp. 11-12

the public opinion. As previously discussed, this has the potential for a significant backlash to more active forms of media relations, especially if the media begins to feel it is being manipulated. The result of these two factors is that the additional benefit to be gained from improved use of current tools may not be as large as the potential benefit that could be gained from the new GA function.

There are difficulties that will be encountered when trying to create a new Government Affairs. There are things that could probably be done or be done better with existing tools to help shape and maintain public opinion. However, looking at the potential for increased benefits as compared to the potential for a backlash against what is being done shows that the chance for a greatest improvement in the U.S. military's ability to maintain public support comes form working closer with the government. The establishment of a Government Affairs function within the Combatant or Joint Task Force Commander's Staff should go a long way to improving our abilities in this area.

CONCLUSION

It has long been recognized that public support is a key element in allowing the military to reach a successful conclusion to various operations. This support must first be obtained prior to deploying military forces, and then must be sustained throughout the operation. It is in this sustenance that the military can play a greater role and thus help ensure success in the field.

Public opinion changes based on a calculation of five factors: potential benefits, prospective and actual costs, prospects for success, changed expectations during a conflict, and the amount of consensus or dissensus that exists among political leaders.[40] These factors

---

[40] Larson, Casualties and Consensus, pp. 10-12

will change public opinion only when they are received as a message, and then only if they are internalized by the individual. From this framework, it is seen that political leaders play a key role in shaping public support, by expressing dissent, influencing the amount of media coverage provided, and finally by affecting which audiences will internalize the message of that political leader.

In order to influence this critical vulnerability in the war for public support, a formal, systematic method is needed to allow the military to interact with and positively influence these political leaders. Just as engagement was the preferred method for resolving differences with China, so should engagement be the plan to bring Congress and the military to a closer understanding. To accomplish this, a formal Government Affairs function within the joint staff should be established. Working from the Pentagon, the Combatant Command and the Joint Task Force, the Government Affairs staff should provide the ability to better inform the political leaders of the particulars of ongoing operations. In doing so, the calculus of support for those leaders should be positively influenced. This should, in turn, result in a positive effect on public support throughout the country. In the end, communicating more effectively with our own government should make it easier to do our job.

Bibliography

Bender, Bryan. "Veterans Take on New Battle: Run for Office," *The Boston Globe*, 27 November 2005.

Bennett, W. Lance and David L. Paletz, eds. <u>Taken By Storm: The Media, Public Opinion, and U.S. Foreign Policy in the Gulf War</u>. Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press, 1994.

Graham, Carl Royce. <u>A Democratic Call To Arms: Public Opinion and Intervention Policy</u>. Monterey, CA: Naval Postgraduate School, June 1991.

Joint Publication System. <u>Joint Publication 3-61: Doctrine for Public Affairs in Joint Operations</u>. Washington D.C.: 14 May 1997.

Larson, Eric V. <u>Casualties and Consensus: The Historical Role of Casualties in Domestic Support for U.S. Military Operations</u>. Santa Monica, CA: RAND, 1996.

Larson, Eric V. <u>Ends and Means in the Democratic Conversation</u>. Santa Monica, CA: RAND, 1996.

Larson, Eric V and Bogdan Savych. <u>American Public Support For U.S. Military Operations From Mogadishu to Baghdad</u>. Santa Monica, CA: RAND, 2005.

Markel, Lester. <u>Public Opinion and Foreign Policy</u>. New York: Harper and Brothers, 1949.

Paul, Christopher and James J. Kim. <u>Reporters on the Battlefield: The Embedded Press System in the Historical Context</u>. Santa Monica, CA: RAND, 2004.

Schwarz, Benjamin C. <u>Casualties, Public Opinion, and U.S. Military Intervention</u>. Santa Monica, CA: RAND, 1994.

Senate Armed Services Committee Hearing Schedule; available from http://armed-services.senate.gov/hearings.cfm. Accessed 8 Feb 2006.