

MEMORANDUM FOR Faculty Advisor, Group Room L09, Fort Bliss, TX 79918-8002

SUBJECT: OPS Public Affairs

1. Thesis Statement. Public Affairs fulfills the Army's obligation to keep the American people and the Army informed.
2. Discussion. What is the role of Public Affairs at the installation; brigade combat team (BCT); special operations; and theater level? Where should Public Affairs fall within the organization of each level? How can public affairs be made more effective at each level?
3. Conclusion. Public Affairs fulfills its obligations despite the challenges of operating in two theaters of combat operations and within interagency organizations. Public Affairs will lose credibility and effectiveness if it attempts to create news or overtly influence public opinion.
4. Counterpoint. Public Affairs is a waste of resources and manpower that provides no added value to commanders or combat operations. Commanders do not understand their capabilities and do not utilize them to maximum effect.
5. Haines Award. We request that the Haines Award Selection Board consider this paper for the General Haines Award for Excellence in research. USASMA American Psychological Association (APA) Style Handbook, USASMA American Psychological Association (APA) Style Reference Handbook, USASMA American Psychological Association (APA) Writing Style Handbook, *Writing Research Papers*, 11th Edition by James D. Lester, are the guides used in the preparation of this research paper.



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Running Head: PUBLIC AFFAIRS OPERATIONS

Public Affairs Operations

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13 January 2009

Outline

Thesis: Public Affairs fulfills the Army's obligation to keep the American people and the Army informed.

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- A. Doctrinally, the Public Affairs cell is a special staff section that reports to the commander
- B. Within interagency and combined staffs the Public Affairs cell should remain an independent staff section with direct access to the commander to maintain credibility

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- A. Understanding the role of Public Affairs Operations
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- C. Public Affairs Officers must possess the skills, experience, and knowledge to run Public Affairs Operations in a strategic environment
- D. Adequate manning

V. (Opposing View) Public Affairs Operations should merge with other capabilities to influence opinion and change perceptions or behavior

- A. Public Affairs should be merged with Information Operations (IO)
- B. Public Affairs should be merged with Psychological Operations (PSYOPS)
- C. Public Affairs add no combat capabilities to commanders

VI. Conclusion

- A. Public Affairs fulfills its obligations despite the challenges of operating within interagency organizations and two combat areas of operation
- B. Public Affairs will lose credibility and effectiveness if it attempts to create news or overtly influence public opinion

Abstract

This essay examines Public Affairs (PA) operations in the Army. It argues that PA fulfills its obligation to keep the American public and the Army informed. The role of PA in the Army is to serve as a conduit of factual information between the commander and the command as well as the public. The opposing view is that PA assets should be used in conjunction with Psychological Operations (PSYOPS) and Information Operations (IO) as a means of disseminating disinformation in order to change public opinion. The essay concludes that PA assets will lose credibility if used in this manner and that it fulfills its obligations despite the challenges of transformation, operating in an interagency construct, and operating in two combat theaters.

Public Affairs Operations

The First Amendment of the Constitution guarantees, “Congress shall make no law...abridging the freedom of...the press,” and ever since has created a constant struggle between the government and the people over access to information. (Monk, 2003, p. 127) As American forces became involved in a Global War on Terrorism after the tragic events of September 2001, Public Affairs (PA) assets struggled to fulfill their professional obligation to inform in an environment where they were under intense pressure to become a tactical tool to influence public opinion. Today, it continues to fulfill its obligation to keep the American people and the Army informed.

Historical overview

We can trace PA operations back through history, but its modern role dates to World War II. General Dwight D. Eisenhower and his staff routinely briefed reporters on highly confidential information about troop movements and battle strategies in order to keep the American public informed. Eisenhower realized the importance of developing a relationship with the reporters based on timely and accurate reporting of factual information and the positive impact that such a relationship would have on maintaining public support for the war effort. This relationship was not easy to maintain, however, as commanders balanced the requirement of disseminating information with their responsibility to safeguard secret information, making the job of PA a difficult one. As technology became more advanced and information became easier to transmit, the PA became not only a conduit for information, but found itself in the business of controlling which information it released. Public Affairs sought to acclimate to this new role, and as the Army became entwined in additional conflicts the Army realized the importance of a strong media relationship.

In Vietnam, the first war of the mass communication age, the relationship became strained and controversial, leading to a perception that the Army was being less than factual in its reporting. This resulted in an erosion of credibility that severely impacted public support. The Army began to understand that the most effective use of PA was to provide timely and accurate information, within security limitations. The use of these assets in this manner strengthened credibility and bolstered public support.

Public Affairs operations were not all bad during the Vietnam era. "We were Soldiers" is one of the few war movies that depict a PA Soldier in action on the battlefield in Vietnam. In the movie, PA assets served to document the events of battle for future generations as unbiased observers, maintaining credibility through the reporting of unembellished and factual information. As in World War I and World War II, commanders in Vietnam used PA to fulfill the mission of taking pictures, writing stories about events, running radio stations, and publishing "base" newspapers for deployed Soldiers, as well as a means to inform the American public at home.

During the 1990s, as the spread of information became almost instantaneous, PA found its job infinitely more difficult, especially in an environment where media organizations were in competition with each other to break a story first. During Operations Desert Shield and Desert Storm, this competition was managed, with PA proving instrumental in mass media briefings, fulfilling the role as conduit of information to inform the American public on successes and progress by providing almost real time information. (Bennett and Paletz, 1994, p. 134) In contrast, the media fiasco on the beaches of Mogadishu, Somalia in 1992 placed American forces at risk, namely due to the absence of PA personnel in the area to coordinate, supervise, and manage the release of information. Despite such instances, for the most part during operations in

the 1990s PA assets were on hand wherever American forces were operating, relaying information back to home station and the American public. After the tragic events of September 2001, the Army became involved in a new type of warfare that would create additional challenges for PA operations.

Evolution of Public Affairs

After 9/11, armed forces and the enemy that they would fight drastically changed. Today, we are involved in two different wars against an enemy that has advanced technology available to them and who realize the importance of public support and Information Operations. PA must keep a much closer hold on information, considering how it may affect our efforts on the ground before releasing it to the media. The advent of faster computers and satellite technology enable almost instantaneous dissemination to a worldwide audience make the job of the PA section more difficult to manage. Commanders must understand how and when to use their media assets to protect vital information while allowing them to fulfill the Army's obligation to keep the American people and the Army informed. Transformation and the challenge of operating in two combat theaters against a determined enemy has forced commanders to reevaluate the role of their assets, considering if and when they should integrate them into the tactical realm of Information and Psychological Operations. While this debate raged, PA still maintained its most visible role, that of synchronizing communications with the media.

At the height of Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF), more than 500 news media representatives and crews embedded within military units. (Johnson, 2005) By contrast, Afghanistan did not see as many embedded media representatives due to the limited number of American military units involved and the secret nature of those that were engaged. Public

Affairs played a critical role in the supervision and management of these embeds, balancing operational security with the need to keep the public informed. The assets also utilized the Internet and high-speed communications technology to fulfill their obligations. Back home, PA compiled information for senior leaders and fed factual and timely reports to the Pentagon for their press briefings during operations in Iraq. Simultaneously, these assets coordinated efforts with the Central Command (CENTCOM) operations briefing from Doha, Qatar, providing the most up to date information to the American public and the families of those in harms way. (Bennett and Paletz, 1994, p. 240)

Public Affairs assets also became the focal point for communications with the local populace in both Afghanistan and Iraq, as a means of countering disinformation of enemy combatants in the areas of operation. The importance of these combined missions and the need to synchronize not only the external communications but the internal communications between PA assets of different commands led to the creation of theater specific organizations that combined PA assets with IO and PSYOPS elements. These interagency organizations, meant to streamline operations, had the unintended side effect of damaging the effectiveness of PA operations, namely because it cast a shadow over the credibility of PA. To better understand the dangers inherent in this construct, it is important to understand the role of PA at each level within the Army.

The Role of Public Affairs

Installation level

The PA section at the installation is part of the installation commander's special and personal staff (FM 100-22, 1994, p. 2-6). Their role is to develop a relationship with the local community as a means of communicating the Army story to the public, provide news

releases and factual data on issues that affect the Army, provide installation personnel with talking points and official Army and command positions of topics of interest to the Department of Defense and the Army, and to serve as the hub for the dissemination of information for the installation commander. PA assets also provide training on media awareness, escort visiting media agencies and reporters, and when needed advise the commander on developing stories that may be detrimental to the installation or the Army.

In today's society, it is impossible to avoid the media. Avoidance and inadvertent manipulation often leads to the erosion of public faith and support for the Army. Recently the Army has come under intense scrutiny for altering official photographs for dissemination to the Associated Press. The seemingly harmless alteration of the background of a photo of General Anne Dunwoody, with no ill intent to defraud or misinform, had the unintended effect of shattering the credibility of all official Army photographs released to the media. Public Affairs, as the agency in charge of the release of this information, also suffered a loss of credibility due to this incident. The installation commander uses PA as a capability to provide factual information that tells of the accomplishments of the Army, keeps Soldiers and Families informed, and mitigates bad publicity by the dissemination of facts, with the emphasis on accuracy. The case cited demonstrates the importance of maintaining the credibility and how a benign action can have devastating effects. Further, the commander can prevent further occurrences by using PA in supporting the installation through "educating, training and counseling of Soldiers, Family Members, and civilian employees on their public affairs responsibilities, rights, and roles." (FM 100-22, 1994, p. 2-6). The emphasis at the installation level must be on truthfulness in order to maintain good faith in the message, and PA is the conduit the commander uses to achieve this.

The PA also serves as the vital link to the Families and local civilian community. While many often attribute this role to military operations, the installation PA provides a critical function in other areas, namely during disaster or emergency situations. In these instances, it often serves as the lead for the dissemination of information, situational updates, and shelter and aid location to not only installation personnel, but also the local community. The Public Affairs Officer develops a communication strategy for the installation commander, and oversees its execution during the operation. They also serve as the voice of the command, providing the capabilities to reach large audiences through mass communication. At the installation level, PA assets are indispensable as the conduit of information.

Brigade Combat Teams

Before the Army transformation efforts to change from a division based to a brigade based force, PA assets were part of the Division Headquarters element. When a brigade under the division deployed, these assets were either attached from home station or from a Reserve PA detachment for the duration of the operation. The assets performed the primary role of liaison between media and Soldiers, often times providing training to units on media interaction. They also managed the hometown news release program and more often than not communicated good news stories back to installation newspapers in an effort to keep the home front informed.

As the Army transformed to a brigade based force, the manning of PA assets also had to transform in order to meet the needs of the Brigade Combat Team (BCT) commander. Today, Public Affairs assets are organic to most types of modular brigades and provide the Commander a personal staff officer and subordinate Public Affairs staff to address the Commander's Public Affairs needs. Organic public affairs assets provide their commander with a minimal level of public affairs support and require augmentation

during deployment (http://www.forscom.army.mil/pao/INTERNALPAOLINK/FORSCOM_PA_DetPoliciesProceduresFY081_2_.pdf).

The commander's PA needs include the ability to communicate timely and accurate information both internally and externally, while maintaining credibility. The inclusion of organic PA assets at this level indicates the importance the Army places on such operations.

Special Operations Forces

The role of PA in the Special Operations Force (SOF) community differs slightly from their role in conventional forces. In SOF, due to the secrecy and covert nature of most operations, operational security limits the amount and type of information that is releasable to the American public. This is not to say that PA in the SOF has no role, as its obligation to report accurate and factual information remains unchanged, but the timing of release of such information is different. In this domain, the protection of Soldiers, SOF operators, and the mission take precedence over the obligation of PA to report timely information. Regardless of the limitations on time, the expectation of accuracy remains unchanged and continues to be the cornerstone of the program.

While this may seem problematic to the PA, in the SOF community their operational role is to assist the commander in understanding the variables and perceptions of the population within an area of operations. They also develop strategies and campaigns to facilitate the internal information needs of the unit and the external information expectations of the public. Media assets play a key role in advising the commander on what, if any, information is released for public consumption. The Public Affairs cell in the SOF community is an information asset to the commander, balancing the requirement to safeguard operational security and provide factual information to the public. In the SOF community, commanders "must maximize information

operations assets and capabilities ... during both peacetime and contingency operations to enhance ... support to special operations.” (Bloom, 2004, p. 3)

Iraq Theater of Operations

The role of PA in the Iraq Theater of Operations involved the fulfillment of three key functions. First, PA had to achieve a balanced flow of accurate and timely information without violating operational security and exposing forces to unneeded risk. Second, PA supported the commander at the tactical level by providing a means of communicating American intent to the Iraqi people in conjunction with IO and PSYOPS elements. Third, PA provided a strategic ability across two different domains. PA assisted commanders in simultaneously keeping up support at home station and deployed Soldier morale by providing the means to communicate from home station to deployed area. Equally as important, PA assets developed information strategies and campaigns in support of ongoing combat operations. (Johnson, 2005)

By fulfilling these functions, PA provided commanders and Soldiers with a unified plan that dictated talking points and releasable information, as well as publicity on key operational actions and events that showed progress to the American republic and demonstrated American intent to the Iraqi populace. Public Affairs also kept the Theater commander updated on issues that would impact their communication strategy. The role of PA in Iraq became strategically important as public support began to erode based on an apparent bias in the media to report only negative news. Abu Graib, reports of suspected war crimes by American forces, and increased insurgent activity all pointed to a dismal situation in Iraq. The Theater commander used media assets to refine the communication strategy with an increased emphasis on the good news stories such as the building of schools, the transfer of security tasks to Iraqi organizations, and the erosion of the insurgent support base among the Iraqi population. Most importantly,

commanders used PA to communicate factual information in regards to the bad news stories, realizing that in the absence of communication there was a risk that the media would speculate as to the facts. The end result of these efforts was that PA fulfilled its obligation without compromising its credibility.

Afghanistan Theater of Operations

Public Affairs operations in Afghanistan also fulfilled three key functions. First, PA served as the conduit of information for the commander to communicate information internally to the command. Second, it served as a conduit of information between the commander and the media to communicate information externally. The third function was as a platform for strategic communications to allow the target audience to make informed decisions.

Commanders understood that their Soldiers required information within Afghanistan, and in turn used PA assets to communicate this information within their command. (FM 46-1, 1997, p. 7) They compiled factual information and official command positions and talking points on key situations and disseminated this information throughout the command. In this role, PA served as the voice of the commander, fulfilling its primary obligation to keep the Army informed. In Afghanistan PA assets continue to keep coalition forces informed of critical information often not passed through the formal chain of command.

Communicating with the media is the role most often attributed to PA. In this role, it serves as the conduit for the commander to provide factual information, within security requirements, to external media sources for dissemination to the American public. The fulfillment of this role has included an adaptation to a changing multi-media environment that balances instantaneous communication to a mass audience with the need to provide “timely and accurate” information. (Scanlon, 2007, p. 6) As the news media portrays the security situation

in Afghanistan in a poor light, media operations become critical in relaying factual information on what the Army is doing to ensure gains are not lost. Media operations are crucial to ensuring public sentiment remains confident in the abilities of the Army. This is a vital function in Afghanistan, and PA often must balance secrecy with their information obligations to ensure public confidence remains high.

The last role of PA was as a means of strategic communications to target specific audiences within Afghanistan as a means of allowing them to develop informed opinions. Media assets do not attempt to influence public opinion by lobbying or stirring up grassroots movements; they maintain the trust and confidence of the populace by ensuring only factual information is released. (Keeton and McCann, 2005, p. 2) In Afghanistan, the Theater commander used PA as a means to communicate with the local civilian populace, often as a counter to insurgent and Taliban disinformation operations, a role that continues to this day. With such an important role, the PA cell must have unencumbered access to the commander.

Placement of Public Affairs within the command structure

Doctrine

By doctrine, the PA cell is a special staff section that is embedded in the headquarters of separate brigades, divisions, and echelons above division that reports directly to the commander. At the theater level, the PA cell has the additional responsibility of providing PA support and guidance to subordinate units deployed in support of combat operations and has operational and tactical control of all PA assets, whether organic, aligned, or attached, of the Army headquarters and coordinates operations throughout the theater. The cell conducts PA planning and analysis for the commander and develops information strategies and campaigns in support of operations.

(FM 46-1, 1997) While PA manning may vary depending on the level at which it is attached, this basic placement remains unchanged at each level of operation.

At the BCT, SOF, and installation level, PA is a special staff section that reports directly to the commander in support of conducting PA Operations. They are utilized at all levels of command and are under the command and control of the gaining theater commander. In Iraq and Afghanistan, the PA units are “organized as Public Affairs Operations Centers (PAOC), Mobile Public Affairs Detachments (MPAD), Broadcast Operation Detachment (BOD), and Public Affairs Detachments (PAD). These units are highly mobile, modularly built, and rapid deployment capable.” (Scanlon, 2007, p. 3)

Commanders at all levels rely on PAs to coordinate with agencies prior to releasing information, statements, and news stories to the media. PA is also responsible for assisting the commander in “preparing information relative to unit participation in military operations, world events, and environmental matters.” (Scanlon, 2007, p.2) The PA reviews speeches, articles, and radio and television shows for security violations. Often PAs are in charge of writing speeches for commanders, and inadvertently provide them a certain public persona. Doctrinally,

Public affairs have always been an independent special staff section that reports directly to the commander. Public affairs is the voice of the commander and a conduit of information between the command and internal...and external audiences, including, but not limited to, the media (http://www.army.mil/professionalwriting/volumes/volume4/february_2006/2_06_2.html).

Interagency

As the situation in Afghanistan and Iraq developed, the PA cell became embedded within an interagency organization that combined PA, Information Operations (IO), and Psychological

Operations (PSYOPS), a break with established doctrine. Public Affairs maintained their doctrinal responsibilities, however, under this construct there was a danger of losing its ability to directly report to the commander, subjecting it to outside influence and the loss of credibility. (Keeton and McCann, 2005, p. 2) Commanders identified the need to maintain the integrity of this important asset as the voice of the commander and took steps to ensure that their operations were not tainted by the attempts to use PA to manipulate public opinion. For the time being, PA cells retain the ability to report directly to the commander and fulfill its doctrinal role. Losing this capability could have made significant impact on the effectiveness of media operations, specifically in Iraq and Afghanistan, but potentially across the Army.

Maintaining the effectiveness of Public Affairs Operations

Understanding the role of Public Affairs

The most important factor in maintaining the effectiveness of PA assets at each level is for commanders to understand the role of PA in their operations. By understanding the role and using their assets appropriately, commanders will fulfill their responsibilities to keep both the American public and their Soldiers informed. In addition, by understanding the strategic role of PA, commanders will ensure that the local populations within their area of operations have the factual information to make informed decisions in keeping with strategic interests.

Commanders must also understand that during the Global War on Terrorism the correct utilization of these assets is as important as winning the battles on the ground. This includes winning the hearts, minds, trust and confidence of the people in Iraq and Afghanistan, as well as the American public, while maintaining the public support for and confidence in the Army. Commanders face the unique challenge of disseminating important information that assists in the ground war with an eye to the grander strategic vision of the Army. By presenting accurate

information to the public, they protect U.S. Soldiers from unfavorable public reaction. PA must have a good working relationship with embedded civilian reporters in order to achieve this strategic aim. "Leaders must determine whether media representatives are accredited; if they are, they should be escorted by PAO representatives....[PAO] provide media representatives access to all aspects of the operation, within the limitations of operational security" (Bonn and Baker, 2000, pg. 195,196).

Doctrinal employment

Commanders must ensure that they do not use their assets to influence public opinion else PA will lose credibility. To prevent this, these assets must report directly to the commander and provide timely and accurate information. (Keeton and McCann, 2005, p. 2) Public Affairs assets must not be subject to outside influence or used to create news. Commanders use them as a means of disseminating factual information and serving as their official voice. Once PA loses credibility, the commander loses credibility, alienating the people that they serve and jeopardizing mission accomplishment.

Commanders often do not understand how to employ PA forces appropriately and lawfully. Simply withholding information, or releasing inaccurate data, both of which occurred during the Pat Tillman fiasco, can backfire and have a negative effect on the standing of the Army in the public eye. Commanders could have impacted this public backlash by using their PA assets to disseminate public statements in an open manner to preclude the perception that there was a cover-up or that the Army was being less than honest. Additionally, in many instances, commanders are tempted to streamline PA efforts with those of the IO cell. While seemingly similar in function and target, IO focuses on external forces and shaping the hearts and minds of the native populace. Public Affairs' mission is to relay the truth to the American

people and international audiences. The successful accomplishment of this mission relies on a fragile trust with external media which allows commanders a direct link to the American and international community. When PA seeks to shape rather than inform, this trust is shattered and credibility is lost.

Training and professional development

Public Affairs personnel must possess the skills, experience, and knowledge to maintain effectiveness. Commanders accomplish this through in-service professional development, operational assignments and deployments, service on PA staff sections at different command levels, and cross training with civilian industry. (Keeton and McCann, 2005) Developing a progressive career model that incorporates these measures will alleviate the primary complaint of commanders: the lack of training and skills of their PA personnel. Internally, PA assists the commander in ensuring that all officers and Soldiers within the brigade are confident in talking with the media about their unit's story. Commanders also integrate this training into the unit's lanes training or by improvising a media-on-the-battlefield environment to better prepare their forces for interaction with the media.

Adequate manning

Even though the Army allocated PA at the brigade level, the positions are in such high demand that they are often unfilled until deployment, and even then may not materialize. During current operations, PA is a high-demand, low-density Military Occupational Specialty (MOS). Their customers are the organization they serve with and the media that comes to them to retrieve information. The shortfall in manning has resulted in a situation where "brigades and battalions are filling PAO slots with untrained personnel. Personnel assigned to these key positions must quickly acquire an understanding of media engagement and begin

building relationships with news media representatives” (<http://usacac.army.mil/cac2/call/docs/07-04/ch-7.asp>). Often, commanders use military intelligence officer or a judge advocate to fill the role of the public affairs officer. Units have also used other alternatives, such as converting back to the older system of using the S1 Adjutant. The inability to adequately man the PA positions in the BCT is reminiscent of the pre-transformation division based concept and results in the same shortfalls and problems.

While the Army is growing smaller but more efficient due to emerging information and satellite technologies, the need for trained PA personnel remains unchanged. To counter the shortfall, the Army must rely more on the capabilities of the Public Affairs of the Army Reserve and the National Guard. Our operations have become spectator events in real time, and these events shape and form public opinion either for or against the Army. The Army must make a concerted effort to man appropriate PA assets at each level to ensure that PA assets can fulfill their obligation to provide timely and accurate information.

Opposing View

The PA field has come under increasing pressure to become part of the Information Warfare domain. The prevailing argument is that PA, as a stand-alone capability, provides no combat capability to the commander, and as such should be merged with IO and PSYOPS to increase its effectiveness. Arraying PA in this construct would work within the interagency organization structure, allowing for streamlined reporting and an already existent means to disseminate disinformation. Using PA in this tactical role would increase the commander’s ability to shape public opinion and achieve success across the tactical, operational, and strategic levels.

Merge with Information Operations

Information is a combat multiplier that increases the commander's ability to shape the operational environment. (Armistead, 2004, p. 1) Public Affairs should merge with IO assets and used as a means to overtly influence public opinion. The Army should not limit it solely to the obligation of timely and accurate reporting. Instead, commanders should use this structure to disseminate disinformation and fake news if they decide that doing so would be in the best interest of accomplishing their mission. In these situations, mission accomplishment takes precedence over maintaining the credibility of PA.

The shortage of trained personnel also leads many military decision makers to believe that PA should be part of the IO cell within each level. They also believe since PA needs to understand IO tactics, techniques, and procedures, the consolidation of these cells is more beneficial to the overall mission accomplishment. As the enemy seeks to inform and shape public opinion as a means to further their operational goals, the merger of PA and IO appears to present the only logical course of action. In fact,

some in the military at the policy level now advocate that military public affairs should be subsumed by effects-based information operations. To such individuals, controlling the flow of news information and the uniformity of good news messages is the holy grail—the key to ultimately winning the IO war. (http://findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_qa3723/is_200501/ai_n9467730).

Merge with Psychological Operations

The role of PSYOPS is to “conduct in-depth analysis of foreign target audiences, concentrating on their cultural, historical, political, social, economic, and religious characteristics, for the purpose of exploiting their psychological vulnerabilities.” (FM 3-05,

2006) By merging PA with PSYOPS, the commander can gain the platform to exploit the vulnerabilities. PA assets can provide the commander with a means of achieving reflexive control: the ability to incline an opponent to make a voluntary predetermined decision in keeping with strategic interests. (Armistead, 2004,p. 197) Commanders should use PA to provide only that information that supports the strategic goals of the Army, without regards to the maintenance of credibility. The use of PA, as an established credible source, will increase the likelihood that the message is received in the manner it was intended, thus allowing the commander a means to shape public support and opinion in the most conducive manner for mission success. Under this construct, these assets would cease to be a special staff function, becoming integrated as an operational tool used at the tactical level. Such efforts would transform PA into a combat multiplier that can operate across the full spectrum of military operations.

Combat capability

The PA cell is not a combat capability in its current form. Since it is such a small organization, it cannot fulfill its doctrinal responsibilities to keep the Army and the American public informed. As a stand-alone asset, they are undermanned and ineffective. Merging them with other organizations that operate within the same operational domain will leverage their expertise and increase their effect on the battlefield. The expertise of PA in dealing with media and their understanding of the dynamics of mass communication will prove crucial in the commander's ability to dominate the Information Warfare domain by providing outlets for information that may be accurate or inaccurate as the operational situation dictates. Credibility is important only as long as it impacts the message, and concerns of maintaining public opinion and

keeping the public informed are strategic missions best left to the Department of the Army. The true role of PA is as a combat multiplier at the tactical level.

Conclusion

Public Affairs assets fulfill their obligation to keep the American public and the Army informed despite the challenges of transformation, operating within an interagency construct, and operating in two combat theaters. PA serves as the commander's conduit of information and provides strategic communication ability. PA must maintain the ability to report directly to their respective commander to maintain effectiveness. The use of PA assets to create news or influence public opinion through misinformation or reflexive control will result in lost credibility. Once PA loses credibility it will cease to fulfill its obligation, and the loss of credibility could create a perception that causes the public to lose confidence in American forces. (Keeton and McCann, 2005, p. 2) Public Affairs assets perform a critical mission that will be severely impaired by combining them with IO and PSYOPS operations.

When commanders combine PA staff with IO forces, they undermine the inherent trust the media and other agencies place on the PA section. PA at the BCT is a new concept, rife with growing pains that need to be resolved, but the ever increasing advancements in information technology makes it more important than ever that we communicate information from the battlefield as fast and as accurate as possible. Leaders must endeavor to tell the Army story, utilizing PA to their fullest extent. PA is an important staff section to commanders at all levels, and they must realize that it plays the key role in winning the hearts and minds of the public. They will continue to play a major role in the overall depiction of military activities and the maintenance of public support. The American public has the right to know what its Army is doing and how it is doing it. When we accomplish effective communication and information

sharing between the battlefield and the American people, Soldiers will receive the support that they need and return with their heads held high. Abraham Lincoln captured the importance of maintaining public support, and by proxy the importance of PA operations, when he remarked, “With public support, the nation can do anything; without it, it can do nothing.”

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