



Ministry  
of Defence



## Allied Joint Publication-10.3

# Allied Joint Doctrine for Military Public Affairs





# **NATO STANDARD**

## **AJP-10.3**

# **ALLIED JOINT DOCTRINE FOR MILITARY PUBLIC AFFAIRS**

**Edition A, Version 1**

**SEPTEMBER 2024**



**NORTH ATLANTIC TREATY ORGANIZATION**

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## Allied Joint Publication-10.3

### Allied Joint Doctrine for Military Public Affairs

Allied Joint Publication-10.3 (AJP-10.3), Edition A, Version 1,  
dated September 2024,  
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## RECORD OF SPECIFIC RESERVATIONS

[nation]	[detail of reservation]
BEL	Within the national context, BEL has created a General Directorate Strategic Communications, taking on the role of DirCom, and integrating the Mil PA assets at a subordinate level. As a consequence, BEL cannot comply to the command & control structure as described in Chapter 2, Section 4.
CZE	CZE will develop required personal capacities with basic training in Mil PA according to AJP-10.3(A), paragraphs 3.32– 3.35, gradually and in extent, limited by available national courses.
FIN	The Standard is already partially in use, but full implementation requires additional training, some organizational changes and revision of national documents.
POL	In the National content, the accordance of the strategic communications (D-10) shall be ensured in the area of the organisation and the command and Control of the military public affairs described in Section 4, Chapter 1 and Sections 3 and 4, Chapter 2
<p>Note: The reservations listed on this page include only those that were recorded at time of promulgation and may not be complete. Refer to the NATO Standardization Documents Database for the complete list of existing reservations.</p>	

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## Related documents

### Policy and Military Committee documents

	<i>NATO Military Strategy</i>
	<i>NATO Communication Strategy 2021, 2022</i>
PO(2009)0042	<i>NATO Defence Planning Process (NDPP)</i>
PO(2009)0141	<i>NATO Strategic Communications Policy</i>
PO(2011)0293-AS1	<i>NATO Lessons Learned Policy</i>
PO(2015)0673	<i>Strategy on NATO's Role in countering Hybrid Warfare</i>
PO(2016)0199	<i>External Review of NATO Communications</i>
PO(2016)0225	<i>NATO Strategic Communications Strategic Training Plan</i>
PO(2022)XXX	<i>NATO Strategic Concept</i>
IMSM-0194-2015	<i>NATO Military Committee Policy on Strategic Communications – Tasking to Strategic Commands</i>
MCM-0076-2011	<i>NATO Strategic Communications Capability Implementation Plan</i>
MC 0020/11	<i>MC Policy for Military Operational Standardisation</i>
MC 64/10	<i>NATO Electronic Warfare (EW) Policy</i>
MC 0133/5	<i>NATO's Operations Planning</i>
MC 0402/3	<i>NATO Military Policy on Psychological Operations</i>
MC 0411	<i>NATO Military Policy on Civil-Military Cooperation and Civil-Military Interaction</i>
MC 0422/6	<i>NATO Military Policy for Information Operations</i>
MC 0457/3	<i>NATO Military Policy on Public Affairs</i>
MC 0458/4	<i>NATO Military Policy on Education, Training, Exercise and Evaluation</i>
MC 0628	<i>NATO Military Policy on Strategic Communications</i>
MC DSG(2010)0528	<i>Military Concept for NATO Strategic Communications</i>

### Allied joint publications

AJP-01	<i>Allied Joint Doctrine</i>
AJP-2	<i>Allied Joint Doctrine for Intelligence, Counter-intelligence and Security</i>
AJP-2.9	<i>Allied Joint Doctrine for Open-Source Intelligence</i>
AJP-3	<i>Allied Joint Doctrine for the Conduct of Operations</i>
AJP-3.1	<i>Allied Joint Doctrine for Maritime Operations</i>
AJP-3.2	<i>Allied Joint Doctrine for Land Operations</i>
AJP-3.3	<i>Allied Joint Doctrine for Air and Space Operations</i>
AJP-3.5	<i>Allied Joint Doctrine for Special Operations</i>
AJP-3.6	<i>Allied Joint Doctrine for Electronic Warfare</i>
AJP-3.9	<i>Allied Joint Doctrine for Joint Targeting</i>
AJP-3.10.1	<i>Allied Joint Doctrine for Psychological Operations</i>

AJP-3.10.2	<i>Allied Joint Doctrine for Operations Security and Deception</i>
AJP-3.19	<i>Allied Joint Doctrine for Civil-Military Cooperation</i>
AJP-3.20	<i>Allied Joint Doctrine for Cyberspace Operations</i>
AJP-5	<i>Allied Joint Doctrine for the Planning of Operations</i>
AJP-6	<i>Allied Joint Doctrine for Communication and Information Systems</i>
AJP-10	<i>Allied Joint Doctrine for Strategic Communications</i>
AJP-10.1	<i>Allied Joint Doctrine for Information Operations</i>

### **Allied administrative publications**

AAP-03	<i>Directive for the Production, Maintenance and Management of NATO Standardization Documents</i>
AAP-03.2	<i>Advice on the Development of the Implementation Paragraph for inclusion within STANAGs</i>
APP-11	<i>NATO Message Catalogue</i>
AAP-32	<i>Publishing Standards for NATO Standardization Documents</i>
AAP-47	<i>Allied Joint Doctrine Development</i>
AAP-77	<i>NATO Terminology Manual</i>
<i>Allied Strategic Communications Publication-01, NATO Strategic Communications Training Standards</i>	

### **Other**

*Allied Command Operations (ACO) Comprehensive Operations Planning Directive Version 3*

ACO Directive 095-001 *Public Affairs*

ACO Directive 095-002 *for Strategic Communications*

ACO Directive 095-003 *on Social Media*

Bi-SC Directive 080-006 *Lessons Learned, 23 February 2018*

*Bi-SC PA Handbook*

Concept for the Deterrence and Defence of the Euro-Atlantic Area (DDA)

JALLC *NATO Lessons Learned Portal End User Manual, March 2022*

*NATO Brand Identity Manual*

*NATO Lessons Learned Handbook, 4th edn, June 2022*

*NATO Strategic Communications Handbook*

NATO Warfighting Capstone Concept (NWCC)

NATOTerm, the official NATO Terminology Database

StratCom Training Needs Analysis (TNA)

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## Preface

### Context

1. NATO needs to communicate its values, its mission, its structures and its continuous transformation as a political-military alliance. The Alliance faces a vast number of challenges from adversaries, societal instabilities, technological developments, and contestations of its core values and of its cohesion. NATO's deterrence and defence posture against hostilities, and its resilience in the face of adversity and persistent challenges in the information environment, require the Alliance to deal with different lethal and nonlethal threats at levels both above and below the traditional Article 5 threshold.

### Scope

2. Allied Joint Publication (AJP)-10.3, *Allied Joint Doctrine for Military Public Affairs*, describes military public affairs (Mil PA) and how it is applied within the conduct (analysis, planning, execution and assessment) of the Alliance campaign themes. It builds on the principles described in AJP-10, *Allied Joint Doctrine for Strategic Communication*.

### Purpose

3. This publication provides NATO commanders and their staffs with the principles and guidance necessary to plan and lead information activities conducted by Mil PA throughout the full spectrum of Alliance campaign themes. It describes the aspects and principles of Mil PA including roles, responsibilities, capabilities, applications, opportunities and limitations. AJP-10.3 focuses on the operational level, although it also has utility at the strategic and tactical levels.

### Application

4. AJP-10.3 is intended primarily as guidance for NATO commanders and staffs. However, the doctrine is instructive to, and provides a useful framework for, operations conducted by a coalition of NATO members, partners and non-NATO nations. It also provides a reference for NATO and non-NATO civilians.

### Structure

5. Chapter 1 describes the context and the operating environment for the use of Mil PA. Chapter 2 describes the fundamental aspects and principles of Mil PA, including command and control, roles, responsibilities, capabilities and limitations. Chapter 3 details the activities of Mil PA and their application in the different engagement spaces. Chapter 4 clarifies the Mil PA contribution to operations.

**Linkages**

6. The capstone document for all NATO strategic communications is PO(2009)0141, *NATO Strategic Communications Policy*. AJP-10 is the keystone document for AJP-10.3. AJP-10.3 is an operational-level doctrine, also related to other AJPs like AJP-01, *Allied Joint Doctrine*; AJP-3, *Allied Joint Doctrine for the Conduct of Operations*; AJP-5, *Allied Joint Doctrine for the Planning of Operations*; AJP-10.1, *Allied Joint Doctrine for Information Operations*; and AJP-3.10.1, *Allied Joint Doctrine for Psychological Operations*. Mil PA activities support a wide range of capabilities; however, a strong relationship exists between Mil PA and the strategic communications and information operations. This publication is also linked to military policies developed within MC 0457, *NATO Military Policy on Public Affairs*; MC 0628, *NATO Military Policy on Strategic Communications*; MC 0422, *NATO Military Policy for Information Operations*; and MC 0402, *NATO Military Policy on Psychological Operations*.

## Chapter 1 – Context

### Section 1 – The global security environment

**1.1 NATO and the rules-based international order.** NATO is a political and military alliance of countries with the purpose of safeguarding the freedom and security of its members and, as such, is confronted with a constantly evolving strategic situation that presents a challenge to its aims, objectives and end state. On behalf of the collective will of its member states, NATO is committed to the rules-based international order (RBIO), competing against actors with alternative ideologies that use information activities and legal operations to constantly challenge the Allies' values and support for the RBIO. These actors pursue activities to undermine Alliance legitimacy, stability and readiness, and, if left unchallenged, adversely affect its standing. NATO's ability to rapidly adapt and act effectively above and below the threshold of armed conflict deters adversaries, with effective communication being the first phase of deterrence. As an alliance of states dedicated to the RBIO, NATO needs to protect its reputation, credibility, legitimacy and trust, as well as its strategic centre of gravity, Alliance cohesion.

**1.2 Persistent challenges.** The global security environment is filled with a number of challenges in the information environment (IE) that are persistent throughout the continuum of competition.<sup>1</sup> Military public affairs (Mil PA) sustain truthful and accurate communication in a timely manner to preserve Alliance credibility from being damaged or at least distorted in the view of internal and external audiences. Planning and execution of information activities conducted by Mil PA in these global security circumstances is a challenge in its own right. Challenges Mil PA has to face include:

- a. **A rapidly changing and fragmented information environment.** Today's IE, including the media environment (ME), appears to be fragmented, constructed and developed in a non-homogeneous way from many different perspectives, including by geography, time, goals, means of communication, actors, human factors, languages and cultures, source credibility or audiences. For the majority of audiences, traditional media are no longer the only source of mass communication, and they interact through formal and informal networks at unprecedented speed, using constantly evolving social media. Additionally, an ongoing information revolution enables enhanced decision-making assisted by information and communications technology. From the Mil PA (and media) viewpoint, the IE remains split into traditional communicative space and digital space that is steadily gaining a dominant role in the information technology founded society. Public affairs officers (PAOs) need to adapt continuously through understanding the IE and the opportunities and constraints placed upon the Mil PA community.

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<sup>1</sup> The continuum of competition is a model depicting how attitudes and behaviours shape international relations. The continuum depicts four types of relationships between states/groups of people: cooperation, rivalry, confrontation and armed conflict (see AJP-01, *Allied Joint Doctrine*).

b. **Competitive media.** Media and news producers benefit from more opportunities for production and consumption of communication than ever before. There is increasing competition among media and news producers trying to capture, retain and capitalise on consumers' attention. The sheer volume of communication is enormous for the average person and exceeds an individual's cognitive processing capabilities. No one is able to consume all communication in their vicinity. Without specific knowledge or methods, it may be difficult to tell the difference between factual news, editorialisation, entertainment and fake news. In an increasingly digitalised, interconnected world, content is abundant and instantly available. With potentially unlimited access to information, attention becomes the limiting factor in consuming information.

c. **Digital media.** NATO recognises that, for digital media, technological development facilitates the creation of news and increases the reach of substantial audiences through channels in cyberspace. Artificial intelligence (AI) and machine learning are increasingly employed for both the production and consumption of information. Digital media meet audiences' news consumption speed, unlike traditional media most of the time. However, swift dissemination can reduce the accuracy of information by lessening time to undertake source validation and quality control. Digital media also enable the individualisation of media production and consumption, which transforms audiences into 'networked individuals' and can erode the shared (accepted) body of knowledge within societies.

d. **Hostile information activities.** Actors across the continuum of competition influence audiences and attempt to secure their own aims. State and non-state actors compete over interests and try to gain a communicative edge over their competitors and adversaries. If an actor, however, is working to further its own strategic objectives at the expense of a target nation's security (e.g., by inflicting damage on its social cohesion or by increasing societal polarisation), competition can become confrontation and a threat to national and/or Alliance security interests. Hostile information activities that seek to influence or coerce audiences threaten media credibility and public information: both of these are critical functions of a free society that must be protected or sustained by the creation of resilience and by fostering awareness, trust and the 'higher ground'<sup>2</sup> of Alliance credibility. Hostile information activities are substitutes for physical violence.

#### (1) **Subthreshold activities**

Threats to national security that come under the umbrella of subthreshold activities involve a combination of different hostile measures, furthering an adversary's strategic goals while occurring below the threshold of armed conflict. Ultimately, these measures are about influencing audiences and the decisions they make. Subthreshold activities target vulnerabilities, including systemic weaknesses in a nation. Adversaries aware of these vulnerabilities may probe them to exploit them

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<sup>2</sup> Refer to Chapter 2, paragraph 2.8, for a description of 'higher ground' as used in this doctrine.

at a later date. Subthreshold activities are frequently designed to be abstruse, making them harder to attribute to states; less defined by geographical, functional and organisational boundaries; and more able to blur the distinction between military and civil entities. This combination increases the complexity of the Alliance's decision-making process, as a consequence of which the process becomes harder and the reaction slower. The resulting specificity of subthreshold activities has two key characteristics: the integration of measures (diplomatic, information, military and economic instruments of power) and ambiguity (actor, intent and means employed are deliberately obscured), which is why they are described as hybrid threats. Mil PA creates information resilience through continuously informing audiences about NATO's aims and activities to reduce their vulnerabilities and boost Alliance cohesion.

## **(2) Communication manipulation**

Communication manipulation such as disinformation, including propaganda, is not a new phenomenon; however, its online dissemination is new. In an open public sphere, a 'common set of facts' that constitutes a mutually agreed reality exists only to a limited extent. Against this backdrop, manipulative practices of using information for an advantage risk undermining the public's trust in what is being said by traditionally trustworthy and credible authoritative voices and institutions. This is a measure pursued by disruptive actors to produce, maintain or transform reality via communication processes. Their influence could also exacerbate radicalisation and polarisation. This includes state and non-state actors' information activities that can be transnational and borderless. Disruptors are likely to increase their dissemination of more sophisticated disinformation at higher volumes and speed. It is not easy to combat disinformation by simply telling the truth. It might be right as a concept, but processes are more complicated in the cognitive sphere. Lies may be appealing and easy to spread, while fact-checking is much harder to do or less interesting for audiences. It is crucial for Mil PA to be perceived as a trustworthy, credible and timely source of information, to pre-emptively moderate the effect of manipulations through operating from the so established 'higher ground'.

## **(3) Media literacy abuse**

Malign actors try to exploit the IE and attempt to gain as much influence as possible by exploiting gaps in media literacy, including digital literacy, and the public's limited ability to distinguish fake from factual news. They hide their agenda behind sponsored content, paid influencers, fake experts or advertisements. Instant, low-budget, far-reaching communication capabilities also have the potential to spread fake news and mislead populations, affecting behaviour and having a destabilising effect.

e. **Resilience building.** Fact-checks may be unlikely to reach the same people as the original disinformation. It is therefore necessary to also employ methods of preventing communication manipulations from taking root in the first place. The idea is to build 'higher ground' through achieving and solidifying the Alliance's reputation, credibility, legitimacy and trust, and furthermore to pre-emptively debunk (or prebunk) manipulations or pre-emptively explain and warn against common manipulation techniques, because this subsequently reduces susceptibility to unseen disinformation and builds resilience. Allied nations have the leading role in building resilience within their populations.

f. **Maintaining credibility.** For Mil PA to succeed as part of NATO's strategic communications (StratCom) efforts, and remain relevant and effective in ensuring public understanding of how a particular Alliance activity makes a difference to international peace and security, PAOs persist in ensuring NATO's communications credibility and the chief public affairs officer (CPAO) in particular directly advises the commander on PA matters. To this end, information activities conducted by Mil PA are anchored in a strategic narrative together with all other NATO activities, and are guided by the principles (presented in Chapter 2) and by the code of conduct (presented in Section 3 of this chapter) to ensure Alliance credibility is sustained. In order to avoid loss of credibility rooted in the impression that Mil PA is conducting or is involved in information activities on behalf of other capabilities or functions, Mil PA adheres to the functional constraint and restraint presented below (paragraph 1.26 g in Section 4 of this chapter).

g. **Training and staffing of military public affairs personnel.** The ability of NATO and member states to operate in the complexity of the IE across the continuum of competition requires depth and breadth of Mil PA staffs, in terms of their training and proficiency, among member states. To address this challenge, the Allied Strategic Communications Publication (ASCP)-01, *NATO Strategic Communications Training Standards*, has been implemented (Mil PA training guidance is presented in Chapter 3, Section 3).

**1.3 Truthful information.** NATO member states value, guarantee and defend their citizens' freedom of choice, freedom of expression and freedom of opinion. Hence, citizens of NATO member states are confident about the freedom they possess and are sensitive about human security. Many audiences outside NATO live in countries guided by the same or similar democratic principles, and while many others do not, they all value their constitutional or perceived freedom of choice, opinion or behaviour.

a. A highly interconnected world, providing easy access to technology, offers the ability to deliver real-time, audience-tailored communication to report, command, inform, educate, persuade and influence, but also to confuse, coerce, distract or deceive. Add to this the relative ease with which elements of cyberspace (virtual layers where digital communication happens) can be manipulated, and unprecedented opportunities are provided to influence attitudes and behaviours. The speed and scale by which the IE may be affected by anyone, on any level, create threats and/or opportunities. It is easy

to create and foster hostile information and disinformation in the IE to manipulate public opinion. Mil PA persistently protects and spreads truthful, accurate and timely information to counter hostile information and disinformation.

b. PAOs are mindful that any perception of inappropriately<sup>3</sup> influencing audiences through information activities conducted by Mil PA not just endangers NATO's credibility, but could subsequently lead to negative effects in the form of opposition, negative attitudinal and behavioural changes, and/or the turning of audiences against NATO – all unfavourable and undesired consequences for NATO, its members and its partners. NATO must be cautious not to give a patronising impression with regard to opinions, attitudes and behaviour, especially towards citizens of its member states. A potential boomerang effect could result in a loss of trust and, in the extreme, damage democratic support, the backbone of the Alliance.

c. Therefore Alliance Mil PA must communicate truthfully, accurately, timely, reliably and inclusively, to build and maintain trust in NATO.

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<sup>3</sup> This term corresponds to the 'inappropriately' in Military Committee (MC) 0628, *NATO Military Policy on Strategic Communications*, Section 21, and thus sets the framework for the consideration. Critical to understanding the term 'inappropriately influencing' is the recognition of an important ethical distinction in democratic societies between appropriate and inappropriate influence by military public affairs.

## Section 2 – NATO’s strategy and campaign themes

### Alliance strategic thinking

1.4 **The strategic context.** With its 2022 Strategic Concept, NATO has entered the fourth period of its strategic thinking described as ‘strategic competition’.<sup>4</sup> The NATO heads of state and government endorsed the concept to ensure the Alliance remains fit and resourced for the future. They reaffirmed that NATO’s key purpose is to ensure collective defence. The concept defines the Alliance’s three core tasks: deterrence and defence; crisis prevention and management; and cooperative security. The need to significantly strengthen deterrence and defence as the backbone of the Article 5 commitment to defend each other was underscored. The Alliance has had to adapt rapidly to operate more effectively to deter and counter adversaries pursuing objectives below the threshold of armed conflict, and to be better prepared to fight and defeat adversaries if deterrence fails. NATO has responded to this changed strategic context by producing a new NATO Military Strategy; the Concept for the Deterrence and Defence of the Euro-Atlantic Area; and a new NATO Warfighting Capstone Concept for how the Alliance will operate and fight over the next twenty years.

1.5 **The information instrument of power.** The Alliance operates in the engagement spaces characterised by an IE that has seen an exponential growth in information processing, data and digital connectivity. The classification of information as an instrument of power recognises audience centrality, public perception and information’s influence on decision-makers. This instrument supports all other instruments of power: diplomatic, military and economic.

a. **The behaviour-centric approach.** People’s attitudes and behaviour are central to attaining the desired enduring state, and the whole joint staff of a military headquarters (HQ) takes account of a much broader audience than simply the ‘enemy or adversary’.

b. **Narrative-led execution.**<sup>5</sup> The information instrument competes via narratives. Narratives present facts to audiences and are used to align NATO’s own actions across all the instruments of power. The campaigning mindset (described in paragraph 1.6) requires credible narratives, supported by coherent actions from the other instruments, to have a persuasive effect on actors’ decision-making, resilience and confidence in NATO on the part of member countries’ populations.

1.6 **The military public affairs campaigning mindset.** Mil PA capability, as part of both military and information instruments of power, is used across the continuum of competition, including below the threshold of armed conflict. Mil PA practitioners must carefully and consistently contribute to the development of and publish applicable command narratives in peacetime, crisis and conflict to ensure that Alliance military StratCom effects are created to

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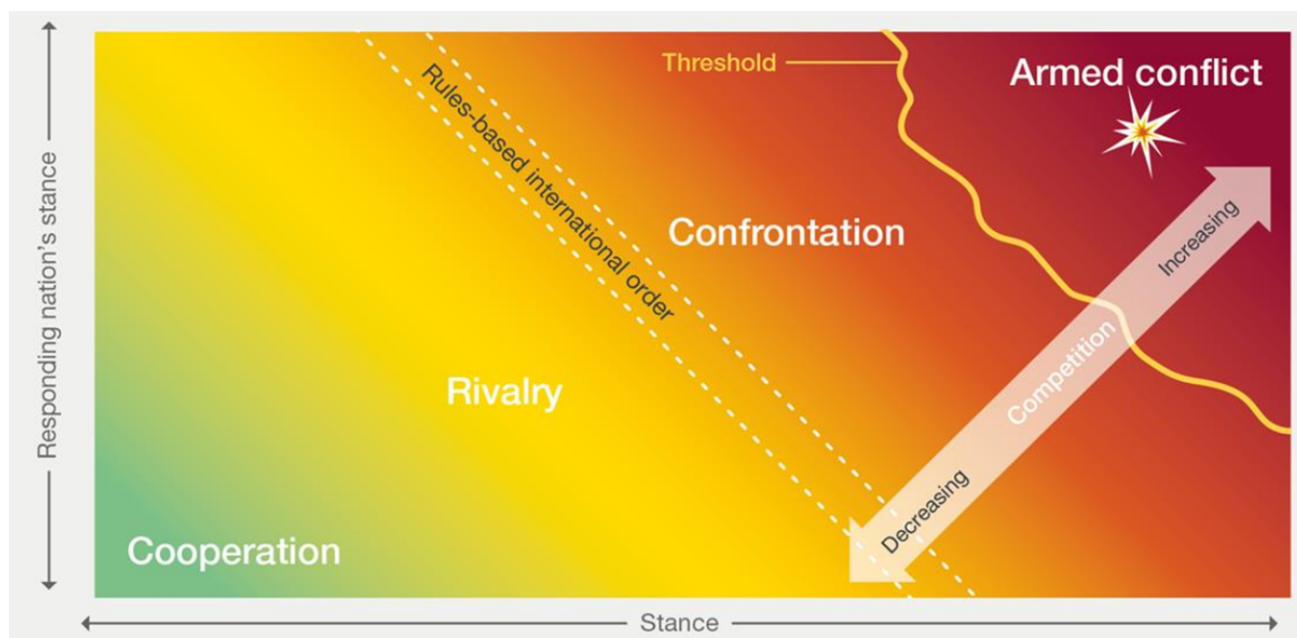
<sup>4</sup> Previous periods were the Cold War period, the immediate post-Cold War period and the security environment since the events of 9/11 ([https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics\\_56626.htm?](https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics_56626.htm?)).

<sup>5</sup> Behaviour-centric approach and narrative-led execution are explained in AJP-01, Chapter 4, Section 1.



support the achievement of objectives. PAOs shall therefore be mindful that, during peacetime, it is Mil PA and a few other NATO representatives (commanders, designated spokespersons) that inform NATO audiences by carrying out active communication measures, often addressing persistent challenges of hostile communication. When moving towards confrontation and conflict within the continuum of competition (where crises and conflicts occur), Mil PA continues to perform the same set of its functions (continuously campaigning), only with increased and/or adapted characteristics as different campaign themes may require.

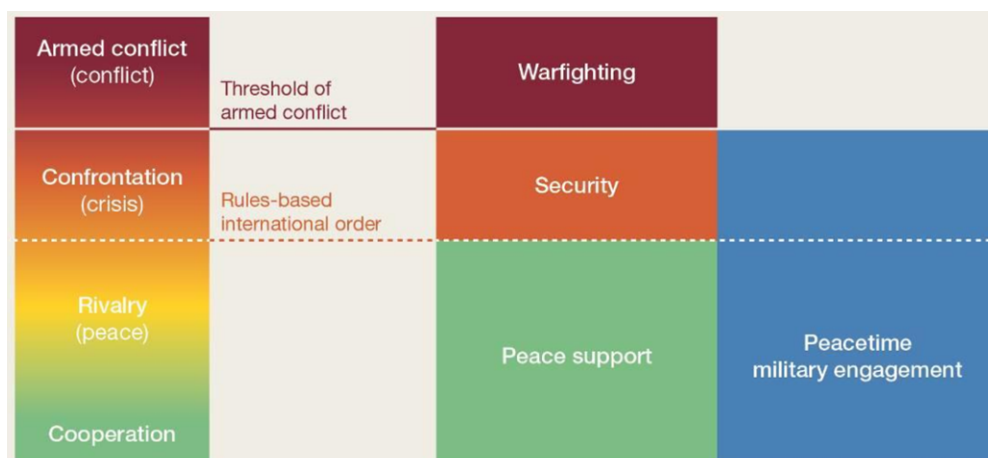
**1.7 Military public affairs adaptation to strategic competition.** Competition is an enduring reality of international relations – a condition to be managed, not a problem to be solved. External communications conducted by Mil PA during four identified types of relationships between states/groups of people – cooperation, rivalry, confrontation and armed conflict (depicted in Figure 1.1) – change depending on needs and opportunities. The changes in the IE that require constant shifting of the Mil PA working balance is a new factor in the way Mil PA operates today with a focus on maintaining the campaigning mindset.



**Figure 1.1 – The continuum of competition**

**1.8 Military public affairs characteristics in different campaign themes.** The military instrument's strategic, operational and tactical levels of operations provide a framework to rationalise and organise military activity and planning across the engagement space to achieve strategic objectives. Operations are conducted within the four campaign themes of peacetime military engagement, peace support, security and warfighting, which are shown in

Figure 1.2, along with how they relate to the components of the continuum of competition.<sup>6</sup> Information activities conducted by Mil PA are prevalent in all the campaign themes.<sup>7</sup>



**Figure 1.2 – Relationships between campaign themes and the continuum of competition**

a. **Peacetime military engagement.** Military engagements apply below the threshold of armed conflict and play a supporting role to other instruments of power, predominately for diplomatic reasons, to build trust and comprehensive relationships. The information instrument of power underlies and supports other instruments, so, when a military HQ undertakes baseline activities and current operations (BACO), Mil PA has the important role of promoting NATO's aims and maintaining audiences' understanding of them. Simultaneously Mil PA staff might already need to counter hostile information activities. On top of that, most communication crises or issues would be triggered by NATO's own forces during their BACO and training.

b. **Peace support.** This theme operates in the rivalry zone of the continuum of competition, supporting the RBIO, and it is underpinned by the principles of projecting stability. The theme seeks to preserve peace or intervene early within a potential conflict to maintain stability, prosperity and the rule of law. Mil PA increases its contribution to

<sup>6</sup> NATO traditionally also uses the framework of peace, crisis and conflict to describe NATO's situation, posture and activities. This framework, which is relatively easy to understand and meaningful to broad audiences, correlates with the continuum of competition through peace within cooperation and rivalry, crisis within confrontation, and conflict within armed conflict. For the rest of this document the term 'continuum of competition' includes peace, crisis and conflict.

<sup>7</sup> Types of operations are not fixed to a campaign theme, and the composition of operations within each theme is fluid and depends on the operating environment and political appetite. For example, combat operations can be conducted in warfighting, security and peace support campaigns. However, combat operations would be scarce in peace support, but may be predominant in warfighting campaigns. For further information about campaign themes, see AJP-01.

narrative-based, behaviour-centric activities (the local in-theatre population is a key audience) to communicate Alliance impartiality (a fundamental theme) when no opponent is designated. Deployed Mil PA capabilities integrate themselves in mission/operation command and conduct their basic functions within the joint information function of a military HQ. Information activities conducted by Mil PA strengthen Allied preparedness and resilience, and boost capabilities to counter malign interference and prevent destabilisation. Hostile information activities and communication crises triggered by rivals are expected, and NATO can address these with tailored deterrence by conducting truthful narrative-led communication about NATO and actively countering disinformation.

c. **Security.** The theme of security applies in the confrontation zone of the continuum of competition, with the five principles of deterrence (credibility, cognition, capability, competition and communication) being implicit in the theme's nature. The theme implies that the Alliance detects, deters and, if required, responds to strategic competition's operating techniques, especially threshold shifting. This may be contesting subthreshold activity or conducting peace enforcement before or after warfighting operations. Mil PA, as in the previous theme, deploys its capabilities to the region of a natural or human-made disaster, or where adversaries have exploited instability to create a crisis. Mil PA routinely faces active adversarial information campaigns, hostile information activities, legal operations and numerous incidents involving its own and opposition forces that trigger communication crises. Mil PA maintains the campaigning mindset and is the predominant communicator across the continuum of competition. During and after a crisis, Mil PA contributes to adversary forces being denied the means to extend the crisis or create a similar crisis in the future. Mil PA also contributes to the creation of enduring change that reinforces deterrence against adversaries and improves relative advantages for Allied security. Effective deterrence – tailored not only to a specific rival, to communicate the costs, risks and benefits associated with its actions, but also against an immediate specific threat – and sustaining credibility and audience support for Allied operations are the main communication themes. The comprehensive approach and narrative would emphasise the Alliance's recognition of that threat and its capability to counter it, while highlighting the imposition of cost and denial of benefits. Mil PA capabilities of the military HQ leading an operation are the main priority for the Alliance public affairs (PA) functional area in terms of their planning, execution, training, staffing, equipping and so forth.

d. **Warfighting.** Warfighting occurs above the threshold of armed conflict (either international or non-international) and comprises combat operations conducted in accordance with the Law of Armed Conflict and rules of engagement. Activity will usually be a series of high-intensity engagements through one or more domains, with effects created in all dimensions, against a significant form of armed aggression perpetrated between one or more states, or a well-organised and resourced non-state actor. It is likely the enemy will combine unconventional and subthreshold methods with its combat operations as part of an overall strategy. Warfighting is inherently linked to an imposition of one's own will on an enemy or adversary by using physical force. Mil PA staff adapts

to the tempo and scale or intensity of operations and conducts its activities in the realm of the highest security threat in the engagement space.

## Section 3 – The NATO approach to military public affairs

### NATO communications efforts

**1.9 Military public affairs in strategic communications.** Mil PA is a part of the wider NATO StratCom effort that aims to enhance coherence of all information activities and capabilities, both civilian and military.<sup>8</sup> All NATO military HQs and command elements have a Mil PA capability. Military Committee (MC) 0628, *NATO Military Policy on Strategic Communications*, directs that each NATO military HQ has a communications directorate (or similar staff element) led by a director of communications (DirCom or similar title) reporting directly to the command group, and so the public affairs office is grouped in the directorate together, as a minimum, with the StratCom, information operations (Info Ops) and psychological operations (PsyOps) personnel. As Allied Joint Publication (AJP)-10, *Allied Joint Doctrine for Strategic Communications*, directs, the DirCom (or similar title) is responsible for the direction, planning, execution and integration of all information activities, so they are coordinated via shared narratives provided by the StratCom direction and guidance (the DirCom looks holistically at the effects of all information activities on audiences, using the three main StratCom staff functions for direction and guidance, and the Info Ops staff function for coordination).

**1.10 Military public affairs functional responsibilities.** Mil PA retains its functional responsibilities for PA matters and, with respect to the CPAO/spokesperson, retains the independent advisory role and direct access to the commander on PA matters, as well as responsibilities for engagement with the media. Mil PA plans, executes and assesses its information activities (within the three main StratCom staff functions) based on DirCom (or similar title) direction and guidance. Mil PA staff understands that the communications directorate (or similar staff element) informs and supports HQ-wide activities to ensure they remain aligned with the Alliance StratCom direction and guidance, and that they are coherent with the strategic and/or micro narratives. Mil PA is informed by the narratives and integrated communication plans that ensure its activities are coordinated and synchronised to support the wider StratCom intent, while retaining the separation of functions required by its respective MC policy. Mil PA is responsible for the delivery of public affairs guidance (PAG), PA-related information activities and analyses of their communications objectives.

**1.11 Military public affairs as a capability.** Mil PA is one of the recognised communications capabilities available to the commander. As the capability responsible for promoting NATO's military aims and objectives, Mil PA retains the functional responsibilities for PA in a military HQ, coordinating with other information activities through the information staff function. Mil PA therefore conducts its basic functions (described in Chapter 3, Section 1) to execute, as a capability, all the HQ's external and internal communications<sup>9</sup> generated through the

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<sup>8</sup> MC 0457, *NATO Military Policy on Public Affairs*.

<sup>9</sup> Military public affairs leads on external and internal communications as per MC 0628 and MC 0457. External communications consists of media activities, outreach activities, community relations and digital media activities (described in Chapter 3, Section 1).

staff processes. In this way Mil PA seeks to harmonise the effects in the cognitive dimension created by its own capabilities during the execution phase with other effects in the engagement space. The minimum capability requirements for Mil PA incorporate functions of plans and policies, media activities (operations), media monitoring and analysis (including providing media alerts to the leadership) and production (writing, photography, video, digital media). NATO through the NATO Defence Planning Process created and employs three specific Mil PA deployable force elements (FEs): the NATO Media Information Centre, Joint Media Operations Team, and Combat Camera Team, described in Chapter 2, Section 3.

**1.12 Military public affairs as a staff function.** Mil PA is a command responsibility at all levels and remains the lead function responsible for the external and internal communications of the military HQ (as described in Chapter 3, Section 1).<sup>10</sup> The CPAO is the principal advisor to the commander on PA matters, while PAOs act as PA subject matter experts (SMEs) to the whole HQ personnel. Mil PA contributes to other staff functions by feeding the information environment assessment (IEA) process managed by the information staff function, with a unique ME expertise to foster the understanding of the IE. Hence, Mil PA integral to the military HQ participates in the operations planning process (OPP), decision-making process, battle rhythm, reporting and decision cycle as required.

**1.13 Behaviour-centric approach.** Mil PA ensures its information activities connect with relevant audiences. The behaviour-centric approach requires Mil PA to conduct continuous and repeated analysis of audiences and media to understand them better, and later, during the planning phase of its own activities, to better select relevant messages that engage audiences tailored by demographics, behaviour, attitude, geographic location or other pertinent criteria. Media monitoring and analysis is a major contribution to the IEA process of communications analysis (narrative, hostile, own, earned). Mil PA staff also delivers inputs to several other analysis processes of the IEA. This includes contributing the ME analysis to the baseline analysis, and the human factor analysis and the media audience analysis, including polling of domestic audiences, to the broader audience analysis. In a narrative-led execution, Mil PA communication provides truthful, accurate and timely information, aimed at specific audience segments, to contribute to their understanding of NATO and its military aims, in concert with other capabilities. The combined result of applying all capabilities in unison can contribute appropriately to maintaining or changing audience behaviours, which is a key tenet in NATO doctrine (see AJP-01, *Allied Joint Doctrine*).

**1.14 Criticality of military public affairs activities in peacetime.** NATO and its entities, their existence, purpose, missions, value and activities, are permanent subjects of public debate and opinion forming (enduring and pluralistic baseline activities of any society) that also shape the IE, independently from operations and thus long before any operation begins. Information activities conducted by Mil PA are applicable in all phases, but particularly in peacetime the proactive contribution of truthful and accurate information to public debate puts military activities in context, facilitates informed perception and public debate, and also builds resilience against hostile information activities. Acknowledging the independence of public

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<sup>10</sup> MC 0457 and MC 0628.

debate, Mil PA contributes to it at an appropriate level on behalf of NATO to enable, justify and foster meaningful public consensus and support for NATO, its mission, purpose and activities, outside and ahead of operations, to build strategic momentum in the IE.

**1.15 Military public affairs communications direction and guidance.** The Secretary General (SG) provides specific directions and guidance on StratCom to all NATO civilian and military bodies and commands on Alliance policy. Detailed roles and responsibilities of NATO bodies are described in Chapter 2, Section 2. This guides communications, including information activities conducted by Mil PA, so they contribute to the achievement of Alliance objectives. Mil PA has the leading role in BACO external communications. A military HQ Mil PA staff on missions/operations looks for higher echelon Mil PA guidance for planning and executing its own activities. The CPAO is responsible for ensuring the integration of information activities conducted by Mil PA into the HQ OPP and decision-making process through active participation in respective meetings and working groups and through advising the HQ leadership.

### **Military public affairs code of ethics**

1.16 As stated in the NATO Strategic Concept, the NATO Alliance is bound together by common values: individual liberty, human rights, democracy and the rule of law. NATO is an alliance of democracies with political control over the military, whose military forces are responsible and accountable to their lawmakers as well as the public for the performance of their mission. NATO Mil PA is the capability responsible for promoting NATO's military aims and objectives by communicating accurate information in a timely manner to various audiences, continuously through peacetime, crisis and conflict. With NATO's values at the core of the Alliance, it is the responsibility of Mil PA to communicate and explain NATO's mission and concrete actions to various audiences at all times. Transparency and accountability reflected in truthful, accurate and timely communication to the public are essential. Mil PA is a command responsibility at strategic, operational and tactical levels, grouped within StratCom staff elements, but not subordinated to other staff functions. All NATO military HQs and command elements must have a Mil PA capability. The CPAO/spokesperson holds an independent advisory role and has direct access to the commander on Mil PA matters, as well as responsibilities for engagement with the media. These responsibilities cannot be further delegated or subordinated to other functions. Mil PA is part of the wider NATO StratCom effort that aims to enhance coherence of all information activities and of communication capabilities, both civilian and military.

**1.17 Transatlantic values.** To effectively communicate NATO's aims and objectives, Mil PA must respect the values and ethics of Euro-Atlantic culture reflected in NATO's principles and values of democracy, personal freedom, political liberty, the constitutional traditions, human rights and the rule of law. As a capability and function that upholds these standards, Mil PA provides truthful and accurate information to challenge opponents breaching legal or ethical norms. To effectively challenge hostile communication, Mil PA must enable the maintenance of NATO legitimacy as a political alliance and trustworthy source of information.

**1.18 Personal freedom, human rights and human security.** Defending NATO's values entails a commitment to inclusive communication,<sup>11</sup> respecting individual identities and affiliations and paying appropriate attention to the needs of minority or otherwise vulnerable groups, such as women, children and ethnic minorities, without excluding any group. Hence Mil PA communicates truthful and accurate information in a timely manner to audiences to enable individuals to conceive informed opinions and act as free citizens in an educated manner. Mil PA contributes to the pluralistic international debate by providing transparency regarding the conduct of the armed forces and their mission within the Alliance. In accordance with NATO's values, the critical voices within the pluralistic debate are respected by Mil PA. Acceptance of dissenting and critical views fosters citizens' loyalty to the Alliance as a transparent and trustworthy organisation. Mil PA respecting a broad spectrum of perspectives underpins citizens' informed opinions and fosters a culture of independent individuals, with greater resilience towards hostile communications from NATO's adversaries.

**1.19 Democracy and the rule of law.** Parliaments, governments, domestic and international courts, humanitarian organisations, non-governmental organisations, the public and the media continuously monitor information activities conducted by Mil PA in relation to their compliance with the law and their values and ethical impact. Respecting national opinion-forming processes underlying NATO's core value of democracy, Mil PA displays vigilance and constant care not to interfere communicatively with national democratic processes. It is an ethical responsibility of Mil PA practitioners to only appropriately inform and influence national publics and to stay in close contact with higher HQ and/or NATO HQ communication leaders for their guidance and awareness. Just as commanders articulate the mission using inputs from legal advisors, Mil PA provides inputs on how NATO's values might be affected in communication across peacetime, crisis and conflict. Transparency of information activities conducted by Mil PA towards the general public, as well as towards other governmental institutions to provide for the integration of security efforts, is imperative for a political Alliance dedicated to the whole-of-government approach. As maintaining legitimacy depends on a variety of issues, such as consistently reputable behaviour and ethical considerations and the prospects of an outcome, those issues must be reflected in truthful, accurate and timely communication. In particular, should ethical standards not be fully met, Mil PA is responsible for continuously communicating shortcomings as well as remedial actions taken.

### **The NATO brand**

**1.20** NATO benefits from the branding concept in an environment where it competes with other organisations, enterprises, parties, bodies and individuals – friendly, hostile or neutral – for the attention and positive reception of its audiences. Mil PA applies the principles of branding to its communications to present a comprehensive, consistent and memorable image to its audiences. Directed at unifying the various sources of internal and external communications from different NATO military HQs, branding ensures NATO is presented in

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<sup>11</sup> Refer to the NATO Gender-Inclusive Language Manual introducing the approach that the Alliance is using to tailor and design language that is more inclusive.



a coherent and consistent manner by all its means and channels of communication, to form and anchor over time a perception on the receivers' side.<sup>12</sup>

**1.21 One NATO brand strategy.** NATO, in the sense of its standing organisational structure, has developed a brand strategy as well as a subsequent Brand Identity Manual<sup>13</sup> that defines elements of content and formal integration, and is binding for all NATO entities across all levels of command. That means individual NATO entities act as communication organs of the same organisation, NATO, and therefore support the NATO brand concept, i.e. present themselves as recognisably consistent with the overall organisation, according to NATO HQ guidance, rather than perceive themselves as separate entities with their own individual branding and independent communication. Any fragmentation of communication along horizontal or vertical lines between NATO bodies, whether in content, time or form, undermines NATO's overall Mil PA efforts, or eventually weaken its distinction from the white noise of the IE. NATO's multiple entities and its various associated communication sources are an opportunity for success – the more consistent and coherent their Mil PA efforts, the greater the communication effect.

**1.22 NATO branding challenges.** Consistent branding across a military organisation can be challenging, as conflicts may arise between the principles of branding and those of traditional military culture. Commanders and especially Mil PA personnel are therefore mindful of the necessity for branding and of any possibly contradictory cultural habits to find practical implementation solutions. The identity of a NATO entity manifests in the way its personnel communicates both internally and externally. Hence, units (through information activities conducted by Mil PA) or their commanders might wish to emphasise the expression of their own identity in their communication, e.g., through the display of individual logos, colours or even messages. However, this will eventually fragment the overall NATO appearance, subsequently weakening its distinction from the surroundings and constraining its communication effect. PAOs therefore support their commanders so they are mindful to harmonise traditional ways of building and maintaining orientation and unit cohesion with current requirements of communication efforts and NATO branding.

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<sup>12</sup> NATO, as an organisation, needs branding that establishes a cognitive link between itself and associated desirably positive attributes. This requires the creation and constant use of consistent, memorable and attractive brand assets that provide sensory and semantic cues, which over time build a distinctive memory effect. Thus, branding must largely be understood as a learning process on the receivers' side. If successful, audiences easily distinguish NATO from the surrounding white noise and deliberately choose to support its messages over others. NATO is confronted with the challenge of standing out against the white noise surrounding its audiences and attracting their attention to connect with them and ensure its authentic messages are received.

<sup>13</sup> For more information refer to NATO's Brand Identity Manual webpage:  
<https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/129138.htm>.

## Section 4 – Military public affairs relationship with strategic communications

### General

1.23 In line with the military policy for StratCom and AJP-10, *Allied Joint Doctrine for Strategic Communications*, StratCom is the command group function responsible for understanding the IE across all relevant audiences. Based on that understanding, StratCom uses all means of communication – comprising actions, images and words – to appropriately<sup>14</sup> inform and influence an audience's attitudes and behaviours through a narrative-led execution in pursuit of the desired end state.

1.24 StratCom is used at all levels of command and provides the focused conception, planning, execution and evaluation of information activities and support to wider activities, enabled by a comprehensive understanding of audiences in a contested IE, to maintain or change attitudes and behaviours of a selected audience to achieve the Alliance's objectives. StratCom provides the broad narratives and frameworks that shape operational-, tactical- and strategic-level planning and operations. It provides overarching guidance for the conduct (planning and execution) of activities in the engagement space for Mil PA, PsyOps and civil-military cooperation (CIMIC) and for their integration and synchronisation through the information staff function. It also provides guidance to other tactical operations (e.g., manoeuvres, targeting and fires) to ensure their effects are in line with the narratives. Enduring Mil PA themes and messages can both be derived from StratCom narratives and inform them, but Mil PA is responsible for effectively managing different emphasis and amendments, if required by the mission phase.

1.25 StratCom, in the NATO military context, is the integration of communication capabilities and the information staff function with other military activities, to understand and shape the IE, in support of NATO's strategic aims and objectives. This integration is made possible by each NATO military HQ having a communications directorate (or similar staff element) led by a DirCom (or similar title), reporting directly to the command group, for the execution of the encompassing tasks. This directorate provides an organisational structure that coordinates and synchronises information activities with other military activities. This enables and maximises their utility across the continuum of competition. The particular requirements of each communication capability and information staff function must still be met through retention of their functional responsibilities and, where appropriate, dual-hatting, as both functional areas lead, coordinate and synchronise information activities with other military activities. With respect to dual-hatting, Mil PA has no role in planning or executing PsyOps or deception operations.

1.26 **Contribution to strategic communications.** To execute its narrative-led activities successfully, Mil PA needs to coordinate with other capabilities and functions. Mil PA has the

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<sup>14</sup> This term corresponds to the complementary 'inappropriately' in MC 0628 Section 21, and thus sets the framework for the consideration.

leading role in external and internal communications and directly advises the commander on PA-related matters.

a. **Integration of Mil PA staff with a campaigning mindset.** With the dual role of Mil PA – as reflected in Section 3, paragraphs 1.11 and 1.12 – in mind, Mil PA staff must maintain a campaigning mindset, as a communication capability, with a staff role, leading external and internal communications already below the threshold of armed conflict, across the continuum of competition. Mil PA is the only communication capability internal to all NATO HQs able to create effects across the continuum of competition. That means a PAO is a communication SME for other staff members and an advisor to the military leadership on PA matters, as well as a planner and executor of internal and external communications no matter what continuum of competition state NATO is in. This is hence integrated within a military HQ in the context of the StratCom for the benefit of the commander's objectives.

b. **Grouping in the StratCom staff element.** The public affairs office within the StratCom staff element, as part of the joint staff, plans and executes external and internal communications synchronised with other military HQ staff elements. The public affairs office is led by the CPAO, one of the commander's principal advisors. This guarantees both an integration of Mil PA advice and guidance (expertise) into a military HQ's staff processes and a strong relationship between principal advisors, including Chief StratCom/DirCom (or similar title), and provides for direct access of the CPAO to the commander for PA matters, as well as for responsibilities for engagement with the media.

c. **Military public affairs contribution.** The Mil PA staff within the StratCom staff element provides support to the CPAO and DirCom (or similar title) and provides advice and guidance on the media and public perception implications of activities, both proactively and reactively. As a command responsibility, and a lead function responsible for external and internal communications, Mil PA is key to understanding the IE and planning information activities. It provides unique media competence in planning, analysis and assessment, and it develops the Mil PA plans as appendices to the StratCom annex within operational staff work.

d. **Military public affairs in strategic communications staff functions.** Mil PA contributes to the main functions of StratCom to support the attainment of a military HQ desired end state:

(1) **Understand and assess.** Mil PA contributes to the understand/assess staff function by providing, through its media monitoring and analysis function, inputs to the IEA and contributing to the comprehensive understanding of the operating environment of the military HQ.

(2) **Plan and integrate.** Mil PA contributes to the plan/integrate staff function of the StratCom staff element by planning its own information activities and integrating them into StratCom staff element planning. The Mil PA external and

internal communications are planned in accordance with the direction of the CPAO and the guidance from the DirCom (or similar title), and they are subsequently coordinated within the StratCom staff element through the information staff function. The Mil PA contribution to HQ staff planning processes is described in Chapter 4, Section 1.

(3) **Communicate.** Mil PA contributes to the communicate staff function by executing its own activities (as part of external and internal communications described in Chapter 3, Section 1) consistent in words and deeds with other military HQ capabilities and FEs. This is ensured by reflecting adopted narratives, which overarch all information activities, binding the Alliance vertically through levels of operations and horizontally across the instruments of power, across HQs and with partners. The Mil PA contribution in the execution phase is described in Chapter 4, Section 2.

e. **The Mil PA role in countering hostile information activities.**

(1) Hostile information activities, especially disinformation, are a pressing, persistent problem that occurs across the continuum of competition. Compounding the problem are the ever-increasing power and accessibility of AI tools that enable malign actors to generate large volumes of disinformation using text, imagery and video. Disinformation is a whole-of-society problem necessitating a multidiscipline effort to counter it. In the NATO military context, the counter hostile information activities effort is guided and directed by the communications directorate (or similar staff element), where Mil PA has a crucial role, especially in peacetime, in detecting and countering disinformation. In this respect the Mil PA media monitoring and analysis function is responsible for:

- monitoring traditional and digital media in the context of a 24-hour news cycle;
- identifying false reports;
- analysing the source, content, intended audience and media selection;
- analysing the impact of hostile information activities;
- recommending courses of action to commanders.

(2) Based upon its analysis of disinformation activities, Mil PA advice is tailored to the situation and the threat posed to NATO and its narratives. Responses are coordinated between the political and military elements of NATO, disseminated through multiple means and in the languages most frequently used by audiences targeted with impactful disinformation.

(3) To effectively counter hostile information activities, the Mil PA approach exhibits the following characteristics:

- Mil PA maintains a persistent campaigning mindset across the continuum of competition;

- the information activities conducted by Mil PA are scalable in response to varying levels of hostile information activity;
- Mil PA engages directly with journalists and opinion-formers to correct false reports and to build and maintain trust and credibility with the public and media;
- in concert with other functions involved in IEA, Mil PA provides longer-term analyses of disinformation issues, including the identification of trends and patterns in hostile information activities. This allows for a strategic approach when developing NATO's responses, including both resilience against the hostile information activities and sustainable 'higher ground' building (as described in paragraph 1.2. e.).

(4) In countering hostile information activities, Mil PA follows the principles outlined in Chapter 2, Section 1. Adhering to these principles is essential for maintaining organisational credibility and trust with both internal and external audiences, including the media. This approach can help deter disinformation and, most importantly, safeguards NATO's reputation and operational effectiveness.

f. **Military public affairs and influence.** Understanding that any form of communication has an influence<sup>15</sup> on audiences it reaches, Mil PA conducts its activities only through communicating accurate information in a timely manner to enhance awareness and understanding of military aspects of the Alliance role, operations, missions, activities and issues, thereby reinforcing its organisational credibility and promoting NATO's military aims and objectives.

g. **Military public affairs functional constraint and restraint.** StratCom ensures that all StratCom disciplines are coordinated and deconflicted, but Mil PA has no role in planning or executing PsyOps or deception operations.<sup>16</sup> The CPAO must be informed through the information staff function of any psychological or deception operations being executed by their own forces, to guarantee the Mil PA capacity to address any unintended effects that can occur in the IE.

### **Military public affairs linkage to information-related functions**

1.27 **Military public affairs relation to civil-military cooperation.** CIMIC with its core activities – civil factor integration and civil-military interaction (CMI)<sup>17</sup> – is closely related to information activities conducted by Mil PA, including external communications (community relations, outreach) and media monitoring and analysis. A military HQ OPP, battle rhythm

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<sup>15</sup> Influence: the capacity to have an effect on the character or behaviour of someone or something, or the effect itself (COED).

<sup>16</sup> MC 0457, MC 0628 and AJP-10, *Allied Joint Doctrine for Strategic Communications*.

<sup>17</sup> For further information, see MC 0411, *NATO Military Policy on Civil-Military Cooperation and Civil-Military Interaction*, and AJP-3.19, *Allied Joint Doctrine for Civil-Military Cooperation*.

and decision-making process ensure the effective coordination of CIMIC and Mil PA as they can jointly create effects in the IE. CIMIC activities effectively contribute to:

- a. The analysis/assessment of outcomes of the external communication (through both the media and direct community relations), such as message consumption or observed behavioural change, can be supported by CIMIC analysis and assessment based on data and information collected through CMI direct contacts in the field with non-military actors.
- b. CMI with non-military audiences can contribute to the creation of Mil PA opportunities. Both capabilities complement each other's activities as they create effects in the cognitive dimension. Coordination between Mil PA and CIMIC supports the establishment of positive media coverage of CMI activities and minimises the creation of a hostile image or audience indifference.

**1.28 Military public affairs relation to other information disciplines.** Info Ops is the staff function that analyses the IE, synchronises planning information activities, integrates them into a military HQ OPP and provides assessment. While the DirCom (or similar title) is responsible for ensuring Mil PA plays no role in the planning and conduct of PsyOps or deception operations, it is essential that information activities conducted by Mil PA are integrated, coordinated and deconflicted with other activities to maintain the integrity and consistency of Alliance narratives and messages. Mil PA is distinct from other information/communication capabilities in that:

- a. Mil PA has the potential ability to reach any audiences, both internal and external.
- b. Mil PA is conducted continuously across the continuum of competition.
- c. Mil PA does not seek to inappropriately<sup>18</sup> influence behaviours.

**1.29 Military public affairs relation to the joint effects staff function.** The staff function that coordinates and integrates StratCom direction and guidance horizontally within each NATO military HQ is Info Ops, which leads in the understanding of audiences, through the IEA, to identify cognitive effects within audiences, which are planned as information activities and coordinated with the joint targeting process. Mil PA supports the IEA with media monitoring and analysis products, specifically for the baseline, audience, human factor, and communications analyses and assessments, and supports the planning and integration of the information activities executed by Mil PA to communicate to audiences. The Info Ops staff function integrates and synchronises information activities at the operational level through the Information Activities Working Group, which contributes to the creation of joint effects in concert with other capabilities.

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<sup>18</sup> This term corresponds to the 'inappropriately' in MC 0628 Section 21, and thus sets the framework for the consideration.

## **Military public affairs linkage to NATO public affairs**

1.30 The NATO Spokesperson, on behalf of the SG, provides day-to-day direction to all HQ media activities, including messaging, and offers guidance to Mil PA to ensure that all NATO messages and communications are consistent with political direction and decisions.

1.31 Through direction and guidance from the SG, the NATO Spokesperson develops messages for the Alliance.

1.32 These messages are then taken by strategic commands as facilitated by the International Military Staff Public Affairs and Strategic Communications Advisor and developed in line with StratCom direction and guidance into military plans, typically in the form of operation plans' PA appendices, fragmentary orders, PAG or any other forms of Mil PA campaign plans.

1.33 The NATO HQ Public Diplomacy Division Press and Media Section does not have direct tasking authority over the Mil PA structure at any level. At the direction of the NATO Spokesperson and following the North Atlantic Council-approved StratCom policy, it coordinates closely, via the functional line of authority described in Chapter 2, Section 4, with Mil PA across the chain of command to ensure that factual and timely information is provided for the media engagements of the SG and other senior NATO political leadership. This also ensures the coordination of the full range of PA messaging and information activities, including press tours organised by NATO HQ to military exercises, missions and operations, as well as crisis communications and timely countering of disinformation.

## **Chapter 2 – Fundamentals of military public affairs**

### **Section 1 – Policy, definitions and principles**

2.1 **Definition of military public affairs.** The strategic communications (StratCom) capability responsible for promoting military aims and objectives by communicating accurate and truthful information to internal and external audiences in a timely manner.

2.2 Military public affairs (Mil PA) capability is unique within the joint force as it is organic to military headquarters (HQ) ready to conduct (plan and execute) activities across the continuum of competition. Characteristics of Mil PA as a capability are provided in Chapter 2, Section 3.

2.3 Mil PA leads external and internal communications of a military HQ or a military force, which is done by planning and executing the basic functions of Mil PA discussed in Chapter 3, Section 1.

#### **Military public affairs audiences**

2.4 An audience is an individual, group or entity whose interpretation of events and subsequent behaviour may affect the attainment of the end state.

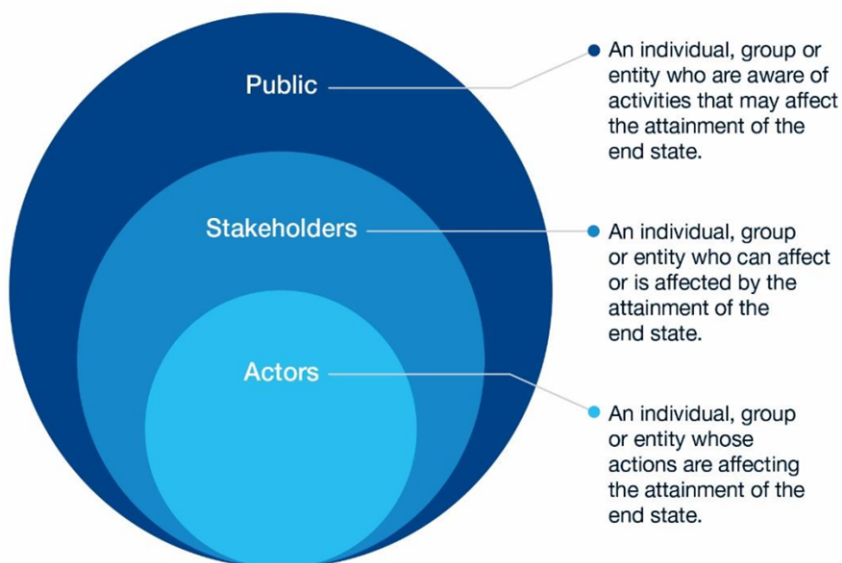
2.5 Mil PA distinguishes the audiences it engages with as 'internal', when consisting of NATO military and civilian personnel and their families, or as 'external', for all other audiences. Mil PA develops its understanding of audiences, further segments them and identifies those most relevant for respective Mil PA functions. This is required to communicate effectively by tailoring messages to particular audiences. Mil PA staff provides the information environment assessment (IEA) with its audience analyses.

2.6 Audiences range from global audiences to immediate participants and are segmented into three general categories – public, stakeholders and actors – depending on their ability to affect the end state, as depicted in Figure 2.1.



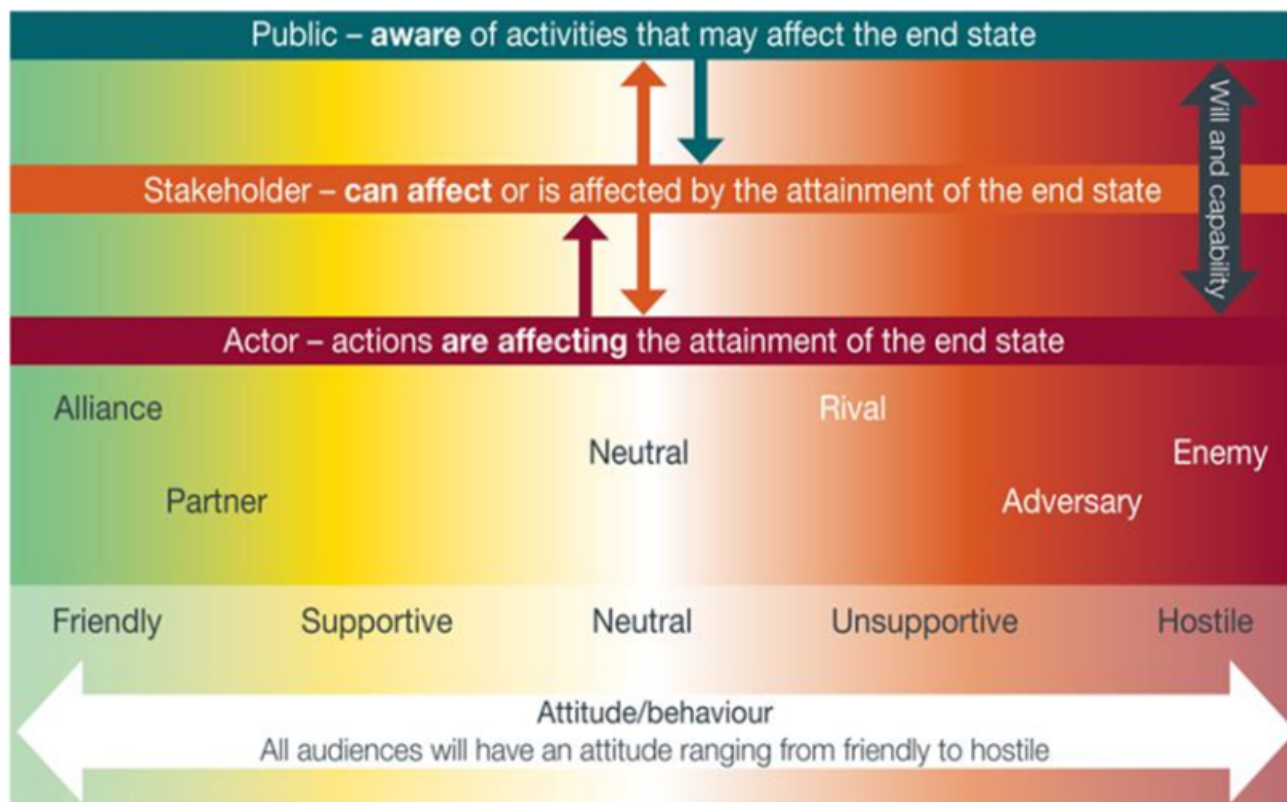
**Audience**

An individual, group or entity whose interpretation of events and subsequent behaviour may affect the attainment of the end state.



**Figure 2.1 – The three categories of audiences: public, stakeholders and actors**

2.7 NATO Mil PA can communicate to these audiences directly, through engaging third-party advocates (with full attribution to NATO of its outreach activities) or through the media. It is important to understand that the traditional media are both an audience and a means by which commanders through their Mil PA attempt to reach a wider audience, since the media are public influencers that can affect large audiences' perceptions and understanding of NATO, and its aims and activities. Media interested in or covering NATO activities shall be considered either stakeholders or actors in the operating environment. Figure 2.2 shows a range of possible audience segmentations used by all joint functions.



**Figure 2.2 – Audiences in the operating environment**

### **Advantage in reputation, credibility, legitimacy and trust**

2.8 Truthful, accurate and timely communication by Mil PA actively fosters the reputation, credibility and legitimacy of NATO and trust in NATO. NATO's strategic 'higher ground' in the continuum of competition is an advantage or head start in these four key intangible assets and in fact helps prevent any escalation during competition. This higher ground must be built and established before it is needed, hence NATO's Mil PA capability is routinely live and in action when other operational capabilities are still not.

2.9 All four intangible assets have strategic effects on different audiences. They provide assurance, build resilience and foster cohesion among domestic audiences (all Alliance populations who usually act as important stakeholders or actors), deter adversaries and reduce risks, and finally build rapport among publics.

2.10 These intangible assets are easier and quicker to damage and undermine than to build. Thus all Mil PA baseline activity must be directed towards building, maintaining and renewing them.

## Military public affairs approaches

2.11 A Mil PA approach reflects the level of ambition or expectations of the desired profile for an activity, event or issue. The Mil PA approach for each activity or situation needs to be assessed on a case-by-case basis, with the external/internal audience interest in mind, and informed by Mil PA considerations of how best to manage communication issues and security aspects.

2.12 There are three possible Mil PA approaches:

- a. **Very Active Mil PA approach:** significant and deliberate effort is invested to promote awareness and visibility and to provide context to the narrative. This approach is called for where high public interest is anticipated or desired.
- b. **Active Mil PA approach:** routine effort is invested to promote public awareness. This approach may be used when the activity is expected to have some audience interest, or where the Mil PA return on investment, given the time and resources expended, is expected to be modest.
- c. **Reactive Mil PA approach:** limited effort is used when little to no public interest is anticipated; where operations security, policy, privacy, propriety or higher guidance indicates that an active or proactive approach is not appropriate; or when full disclosure is not yet possible, for instance based on pre-decisional topics. A Mil PA plan and media lines are being developed in anticipation of media or public queries. Being reactive, therefore, still means being responsive to queries. By exception only, no response is given in specific circumstances when ongoing operational activities are either in planning or in execution, or when specific classified capabilities are employed. Whenever possible, these activities are acknowledged when complete; however, classified capabilities will not be disclosed unless declassified and consistent with national caveats.

## Media environment

2.13 Environments are used to describe the system surrounding activity from a physical and non-physical perspective. There is only one environment, but it can be analysed from different perspectives, depending on subject matter expertise, to create multiple types of sub-environments (e.g., information, maritime, urban, political and human). The information environment (IE) is the principal environment of decision-making, where humans and automated systems observe, conceive, process, orient, decide and act on data, information and knowledge.<sup>19</sup>

2.14 The media environment (ME) is a segment of the IE where communication with mass audiences occurs. The ME includes television, radio, print and digital media. In the complexity of the IE, the different media entities – traditional and digital (including social media) – receive,

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<sup>19</sup> The information environment is explained in detail in AJP-10.1, *Allied Joint Doctrine for Information Operations*, along with the associated understanding and assessment process: the information environment assessment.

process, convey and interact with the information in the cognitive, virtual and physical dimensions.

2.15 Mil PA retains functional responsibility for the communication with media entities that are part of the ME, which enables truthful, credible, accurate and timely information to reach wide domestic and international audiences. Media representatives are to be treated as a specific audience (stakeholders or actors), which gives access to much wider audiences, provides independent and objective scrutiny of NATO communication, supports building credibility and understanding of NATO actions, and increases resilience of NATO's domestic audiences to communication manipulation.

2.16 External communications opportunities and vulnerabilities for a military HQ change as the ME changes. Mil PA manages these dynamically and is capable of operating effectively in a degraded and a highly sophisticated ME across the continuum of competition.

2.17 The media monitoring and analysis function is key to timely messaging and countering disinformation, and to communications posture management. It is used to understand the ME and feed the IEA with media and communications analyses (including media monitoring and analysis, media environment analysis and media audience analysis). Mil PA planning, integrated within StratCom planning, is necessary to develop and schedule media activities, taking into account different factors related to the ME (planning considerations and the generic planning model for Mil PA are described in Chapter 4, Section 1). Media activities are then conducted during the execution phase according to the Mil PA plans.

### **Military public affairs policy**

2.18 The Military Committee (MC) 0457, *NATO Military Policy on Public Affairs*, provides the policy for Mil PA and derives from the higher principles of democracy, which include freedom of expression and of the press. NATO policy requires commanders and public affairs officers (PAOs) to inform the public directly about activities and/or operations, policies, services and initiatives, using means such as traditional and digital media. This is done in a manner that is truthful, accurate, complete, objective, timely, relevant, understandable, open and transparent within the law, and subject to operations security (OPSEC) and personnel security (PERSEC) limitations including the non-disclosure of any information about NATO vulnerabilities that confer an advantage to adversaries.

2.19 Mil PA is critical to communicate Alliance unity combined with NATO's robust military capability as part of deterrence and defence. Mil PA must strive to avoid misunderstandings and miscalculations, to maintain Alliance credibility, to build trust where possible, and to keep communication channels open to contribute to transparency and risk reduction.

2.20 Mil PA is a command responsibility on strategic, operational and tactical levels, grouped within StratCom staff elements, but not subordinated to other staff functions. The chief public affairs officer (CPAO) has direct access to the commander on public affairs (PA) matters, as well as for engagement with the media.

2.21 Mil PA is involved in the planning of military HQ activities and executes its own activities across the continuum of competition. To achieve this, Mil PA staff maintains a campaigning

mindset and, while performing the same basic functions, shifts its working balance adequately according to the current situation.

2.22 Mil PA conducts information activities continually with a campaigning mindset across the continuum of competition and transcend the theatres of current operations, if any; therefore Mil PA has the potential to continuously reach any audience, internal or external.

2.23 Mil PA coordinates with appropriate national military authorities – especially with troop-contributing nations when on operations – its narratives/messaging across the continuum of competition. Mil PA ensures, when coordinating with a nation's Ministry of Defence or equivalent through Supreme Headquarters Allied Powers Europe (SHAPE) Mil PA, that the NATO Spokesperson and Press and Media Section in the NATO Public Diplomacy Division (PDD) are informed. Nations have their individual national political and operational imperatives, but it is in member states' interest that NATO as an international organisation and the nations' narratives/messages are aligned regarding missions, activities and incidents.

### **Principles of military public affairs<sup>20</sup>**

2.24 **Conduct truthful narrative-led communication about NATO.** All Mil PA activity is founded on NATO's values. Mil PA efforts support commanders and staff in the execution of their mission and are conducted in accordance with higher NATO political and military direction. Practitioners are first and foremost NATO Mil PA staff, and they develop and promulgate compelling narratives that support the Alliance's military aims and objectives in line with the commander's priorities and in respect of the strategic communications framework (SCF).

2.25 **Provide accurate information in a timely manner.** This is critical to functional and organisational credibility and trust with publics, internal audiences and the media, and helps deter adversary disinformation in the ME. The impact of Mil PA activity is often directly proportional to the timeliness and accuracy of the Mil PA effort or response: information delivered quickly by NATO representatives can have a qualitatively different effect than the same information delivered a day or even an hour later.

2.26 **Ensure that information is consistent, coordinated and integrated with a higher echelon.** One effect of the global IE is that publics can receive information about military operations from all levels of command, including reports from theatre, from multiple sources. Communication is a collective and integrated effort. Words and actions must be aligned, and commanders ensure that their Mil PA operations disseminate a consistent message through NATO's many voices, and that military information activities are well coordinated according to the *NATO Military Policy on Strategic Communications*.<sup>21</sup>

2.27 **Practise appropriate operations and personnel security.** OPSEC and PERSEC provisions and propriety must be considered and adhered to before information is released.

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<sup>20</sup> MC 0457, *NATO Military Policy on Public Affairs*.

<sup>21</sup> MC 0628, *NATO Military Policy on Strategic Communications*.

NATO staff work is often pre-decisional, and therefore care in addressing holding statements to support pre-decisional actions is critical to ensure messaging does not get ahead of North Atlantic Council (NAC) level decisions. Protecting NATO against criticism or embarrassment is not a reason to classify or withhold information about the underlying issues. They are consulted on in a timely fashion with higher HQs, and with the NATO Spokesperson, because they have a strategic effect. They are not minor tactical issues that only refer to the classification of specific information. In general, the principle of 'no surprise' for higher HQ, including NATO HQ and the NATO Spokesperson, applies.

**2.28 Conduct work with an understanding of the human environment and mindful of multinational sensitivities.** It is critical that the IE and human environment are understood wherever the Alliance is conducting its activities. NATO operations can be adversely affected by unconscious biases or culturally inappropriate references or imagery (which can be prevented through applying a comprehensive approach that includes, e.g., proper gender, cultural, political and other analyses). Conversely the effect and impact of communications is made stronger when they are informed by an understanding and appreciation of local custom, gender roles, tradition and culture, and a good appraisal of the IE.

## Section 2 – Roles and responsibilities

### General

2.29 Mil PA doctrine applies across all levels of military commands, across the continuum of competition and across the levels of operations.

2.30 Mil PA is a command responsibility at all levels, and is part of a StratCom staff element, retaining the functional responsibilities for PA matters. All NATO military HQ and command elements have a Mil PA capability.

2.31 The CPAO is the Mil PA branch head within the StratCom staff element and holds an independent advisory role with direct access to the commander on Mil PA matters. This responsibility cannot be further delegated or subordinated to other functions. As a principal advisor with direct access to the commander, the CPAO is mindful of staff processes and planning requirements outlined in Allied Joint Publication (AJP)-3, *Allied Joint Doctrine for the Conduct of Operations*, in AJP-5, *Allied Joint Doctrine for the Planning of Operations* and in AJP-10, *Allied Joint Doctrine for Strategic Communications*.

2.32 Mil PA staff are responsive to guidance from the Mil PA function at higher HQs. To respond effectively in a timely manner, PAOs maintain direct contact with each other at all levels of command to effect immediate information sharing and coordination. Mil PA, in addition to remaining integrated within a military HQ laterally (as part of its staff), also integrates into the vertical command structure, which involves NATO HQ, NATO Command Structure (NCS) and NATO force structure (NFS). Mil PA staff therefore maintains frequent communication both up and down the formal organisational Mil PA hierarchy (described in Section 4 of this chapter as the Mil PA functional line of authority).

2.33 The execution of military plans often requires the deployment of Mil PA personnel from various levels of the NCS and NFS to establish NATO Media Information Centres (NMICs), Joint Media Operations Teams (JMOTs) or Combat Camera Teams (CCTs) to conduct information activities on the ground (as described in Section 3 of this chapter) or to augment Mil PA staffs of a military HQ public affairs office. Every public affairs office anticipates requirements and is prepared to assist other NATO Mil PA staffs. The priority of effort is always to support operations. Routine information activities and responsibilities never preclude PAOs from deploying on operations. Commanders at all levels are to facilitate the deployment of PAOs to support operations whenever possible.

### Roles and responsibilities at different levels of command

Based on PO(2009)0141, *NATO Strategic Communications Policy*, and AJP-10, *Allied Joint Doctrine for Strategic Communications*:

2.34 **The North Atlantic Council.** The NAC provides overall guidance and direction to NATO StratCom efforts, as well as mission-specific strategic and political guidance for NATO information activities.

**2.35 The Secretary General.** The Secretary General (SG) provides specific direction and guidance on StratCom to all NATO civilian and military bodies and commands on Alliance policy. The SG is the principal spokesperson for the Alliance.

**2.36 The Military Committee.** The MC provides overall policy for NATO Mil PA, in accordance with political direction and decisions, and consensus military advice to the NAC on StratCom issues.

**2.37 The Chair of the Military Committee.** The Chair of the Military Committee is the principal military spokesperson for the Alliance on all military issues.

**2.38 The Assistant Secretary General for Public Diplomacy.** The Assistant Secretary General for Public Diplomacy oversees the coordination of all StratCom activities across all NATO civilian and military bodies and commands, and also directs all public diplomacy activities (except press and media, which are directed by the NATO Spokesperson on behalf of the SG).

**2.39 The NATO Spokesperson.** The NATO Spokesperson, on behalf of the SG, provides day-to-day direction of all NATO HQ media activities, including messaging, and offers guidance to Mil PA to ensure that all NATO messages and communications are consistent with political direction and decisions.

**2.40 The International Military Staff Public Affairs and Strategic Communications Advisor.** The International Military Staff Public Affairs and Strategic Communications Advisor is the spokesperson for the MC; supports the MC, its Chair and the Director International Military Staff on StratCom issues; and facilitates interaction and coordination between the two strategic commands, the MC, and the PDD on Mil PA and StratCom issues.

**2.41 Strategic commanders.** In accordance with overall StratCom NATO HQ guidance, the strategic commanders provide direction and guidance to Mil PA within their respective areas of responsibility. Supreme Allied Commander Europe is the principal military spokesperson for current NATO operations. Supreme Allied Command Transformation is the principal military spokesperson on NATO transformation.

**2.42 Chief public affairs officer.** The CPAO is the head of the public affairs office. On the commander's behalf the CPAO:

- a. Directs, plans and executes the HQ PA activities. The CPAO holds functional authority for all external and internal communications and other functions described in Chapter 3, Section 1.
- b. Is the commander's principal advisor for PA and the HQ's official spokesperson. The CPAO has direct access to the commander. A close and mutually trustful relationship between the commander and the CPAO is essential.



- c. Is responsible for the appropriate and constant fulfilment of PA functions, as directed by the commander, which requires coordination with the communications director (or similar title) and within the Mil PA functional line of authority.
- d. Must be consulted on all command activity regarding possible PA implications.
- e. Regularly briefs the commander on PA activities, plans, achievements, ME developments and possible shortcomings. In cases of crisis communication, the frequency and pace of briefings for the commander about latest developments is adapted accordingly.
- f. Usually functions as the deputy communications director (or similar title).
- g. Leads and directs all personnel of the HQ public affairs office and ensures their required training, education and equipment.
- h. Ensures adequate staffing of the public affairs office.
- i. Requests, assigns and allocates all resources necessary to conduct information activities by Mil PA in support of the commander's objectives.
- j. Maintains vertical and horizontal liaison with higher, fellow or subordinate HQ public affairs offices or unit public affairs representatives (UPARs) via the functional Mil PA line of authority, as well as with appropriate national public affairs offices and Mil PA personnel deployed to NMICs, JMOTs and CCTs.
- k. Participates in all relevant meetings of the HQ battle rhythm.
- l. Develops and promulgates to subordinate HQs Mil PA direction and guidance, as well as Mil PA plans in accordance with higher HQ Mil PA direction and guidance.
- m. Provides media training as required to commanders and designated spokespersons.
- n. Ensures current branding regulations are applied consistently across all correspondence, documents and digital media platforms. The CPAO is the NATO brand custodian for the HQ on behalf of the brand owner.
- o. Has the delegated release authority for Mil PA products and imagery. If required the CPAO coordinates clearance and approval of Mil PA products and imagery with the higher HQ PAO.
- p. Tests respective unit-level policies and procedures, and ensures training of appropriate exercise players in command post exercises.
- q. Ensures that information/document management archival practices are in place in accordance with applicable NATO directives.
- r. Coordinates themes and messages with the commander, higher HQ PAO and communications director (or similar title) within the independent advisory role.
- s. Ensures adherence to Mil PA principles and that there is no Mil PA involvement in psychological operations (PsyOps) or deception operations.

t. Implements a lessons learned process wherever needed to enhance future performances.

u. Ensures information activities conducted by Mil PA promote equal and positive messaging in line with NATO's commitment to advancing gender equality through integrating gender-inclusive language and checking potential biases and stereotypes.

2.43 During the HQ's involvement in operations or military crises, the CPAO additionally:

a. Participates in the operations planning and decision-making process, as well as in battle rhythm meetings in support of operations.

b. Contributes Mil PA expertise to StratCom guidance and annexes of all operation plans (OPLANs), contingency plans and appropriate support plans.

c. Establishes a Mil PA presence within the Joint Operations Centre or equivalent command post to serve as Mil PA advisor and provide early warning guidance.

d. Participates in communications-related working groups and meetings to ensure that Mil PA actions, plans and objectives are coordinated as part of the broader StratCom effort.

e. Coordinates Mil PA involvement in the deployment phase of subordinate HQs.

f. Submits initial and follow-on PA situation reports (SITREPs) to the higher HQ PAO.

g. If required, prepares to assume Mil PA responsibility for forces coming under the HQ's operational control.

h. Serves as the operation's spokesperson (if appointed by the commander and only if the command is responsible for the operation).

i. Directs Mil PA force elements (FEs), either directly, if deployed, or through the NMIC director.

2.44 The respective CPAOs are mindful of PAOs deployed in support of individual national contingents who report and coordinate PA activities within national chains, and, because they are in a national chain of command vice a NATO one, may overlook the added value that coordination with the NATO PA chain can bring. To increase the likelihood that national PAOs deployed in NATO operations are aware of NATO PA policies, guidance and messaging, senior Mil CPAOs at the deployed level establish lines of communications with national contingent PAOs in their area of responsibility, in addition to their operational chain of command. The CPAO habitually coordinates with these national contingent PAOs to gain situational awareness of their activities, inform them of the applicable NATO policies and guidance, and provide SITREPs to the higher HQ.

2.45 The CPAO is responsible for military HQ staff media training, and ensures the staff is trained and prepared to collaborate and assist Mil PA communications in support of the mission's objectives. Staff is additionally prepared by Mil PA before specific media encounters. In this respect the CPAO takes the role as mentor, subject matter expert (SME) and trainer for a military HQ. Likewise, the CPAO ensures that the Mil PA staff is resourced

with the required and appropriate tools and technology to accomplish the mission. The CPAO advises and trains the commander and command group members on conducting media interviews and delivery techniques.

**2.46 Designated spokesperson.** Within a military HQ the commander and CPAO are the official spokespersons, but additional spokespersons may be designated if required. Designated spokespersons are those persons who by virtue of their job descriptions or responsibility are tasked with communicating externally or internally about NATO military affairs. NMICs' subordinate PAOs and SMEs may also be tasked with communicating externally or internally about specific issues or topics. Where possible and practical, designated spokespersons receive media training and are prepared, accompanied and debriefed by Mil PA staff before, during and after interviews. They can provide briefings or interviews to international media at the request of the NATO Spokesperson or SHAPE CPAO, as appropriate.

**2.47 Unit public affairs representative.** Whether a unit has a designated PAO or not, the commander has the overall responsibility for providing direction and guidance to Mil PA to conduct information activities in accordance with the higher command's public affairs guidance (PAG) and integrated communication plan (ICP).

2.48 If a unit does not have an authorised PAO in either its peacetime establishment or crisis establishment, a prudent measure would be for a commander to appoint a UPAR to conduct Mil PA duties on a reduced scale.

2.49 The UPAR serves as the liaison between the unit and the higher HQ public affairs office for PA issues, bringing them to the attention of the higher HQ, and can construct initial drafts of Mil PA planning products, annexes, news releases or talking points for submission for approval through the Mil PA functional line of authority.

2.50 As the UPAR is typically not a fully trained PAO, the UPAR most likely conducts these responsibilities in addition to their full-time job; hence, the duties of the UPAR are limited and the higher HQ Mil PA maintains situational awareness over actions.

## Section 3 – Capability requirements and force elements

2.51 The NATO Military Strategy, NATO Warfighting Capstone Concept and the Concept for the Deterrence and Defence of the Euro-Atlantic Area compel NATO to think about how it competes across the continuum of competition. It calibrates towards the competition's campaigning mindset, with an agile and adaptable posture with the right capabilities, including Mil PA, in the right places, ready to converge as part of an overall NATO strategic position, rather than focusing on discrete operations with a finite end. These concepts are now included in the Mil PA doctrine. The Mil PA capability is scalable and transitions between campaign themes, with the ability to increase its tempo to manage these transitions and the burden of concurrency.

2.52 Mil PA has the following key capability characteristics:

- a. The only communication capability internal to all NATO HQs able to create effects in the cognitive, virtual and physical dimensions across the continuum of competition.
- b. The capability that is publicly recognisable as the official voice of the organisation (when executing internal and external communications functions).
- c. The provider of direct and unfiltered advice to the commander, senior staff and designated personnel on the PA implications of operations, activities and issues.
- d. The primary means of public communication for the delivery of truthful, accurate, timely and attributable information.

2.53 The CPAO exercises the functional authority to lead the public affairs office of a military HQ and to command assigned Mil PA FEs.

2.54 The minimum capability requirements (MCR) for Mil PA include:

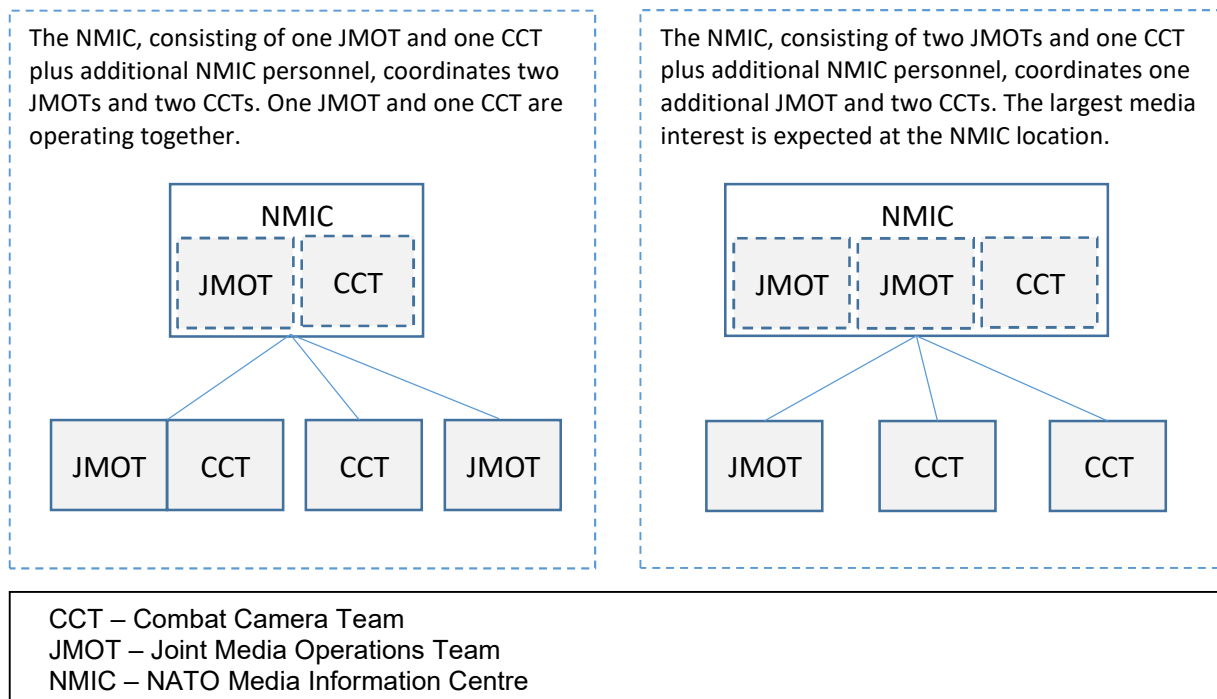
- a. Plans and policies.
- b. Media activities (operations).
- c. Media monitoring and analysis.
- d. Media production (writing, imagery and digital media management).

2.55 The Mil PA capability fulfils these requirements through the conduct of its basic functions (as described in Chapter 3, Section 1) and benefits from the productions collected as part of the IEA.

2.56 NATO currently has three specific Mil PA deployable FEs defined in the capability codes and capability statements for StratCom. These are:

- a. The NMIC.
- b. The JMOT.
- c. The CCT.

2.57 A scalable modular employment of the NMIC, JMOTs and CCTs is executed, depending on actual needs (Figure 2.3). That means the NMIC is the command and control (C2) centre of all Mil PA FEs deployed when more than one JMOT and one CCT are employed in an area.

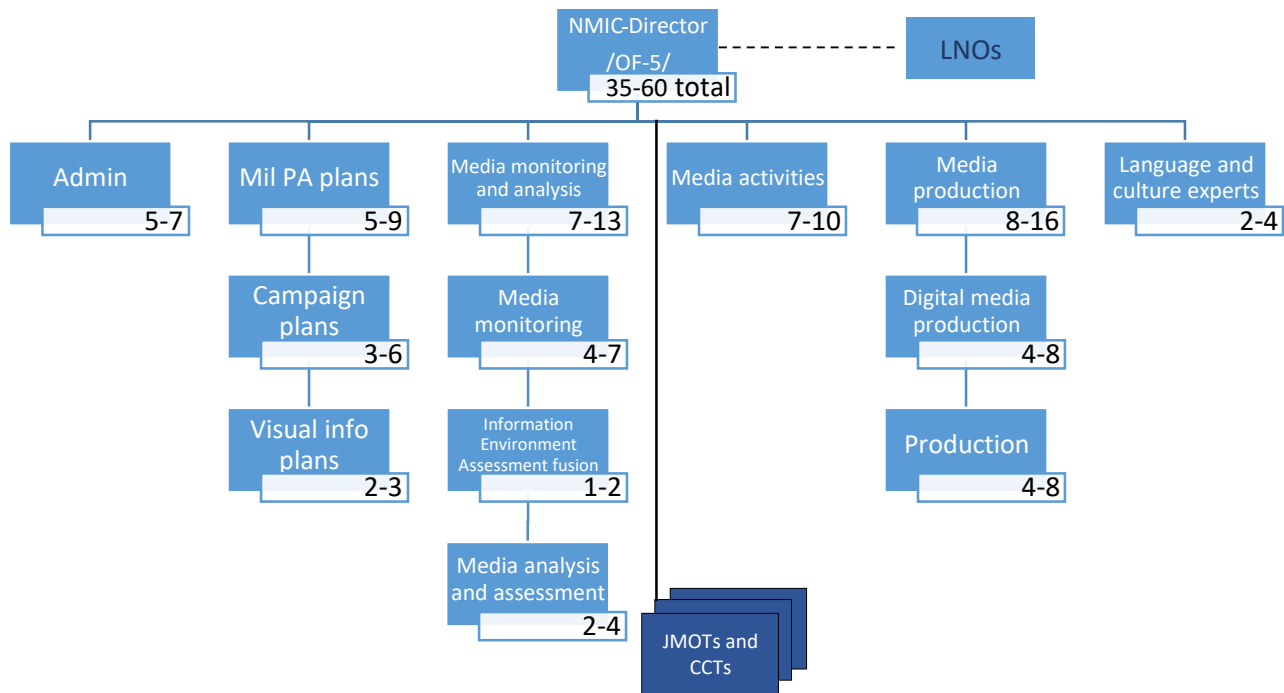


**Figure 2.3 – Examples of the modular employment of military public affairs force elements**

2.58 Neither the NMIC nor the JMOT is the same as, or covers all the functions of, a permanent public affairs office, as in practice the whole of the public affairs office would not deploy – for example, depending on the situation, the digital media activities or media monitoring and analysis could still be covered by the reach-back Mil PA or by the host nation (HN) PAO. The NMIC and JMOTs are therefore the forward, in-theatre Mil PA capability; the CCTs, the production capability.

**NATO Media Information Centre**

2.59 The NMIC is a Mil PA deployable FE assigned to and directed by the CPAO, activated for NATO missions/operations or exercises, and constituted by the deployment of at least one JMOT and at least one CCT. A generic NMIC organisation chart with staffing numbers is provided in Figure 2.4.



Admin – administration of the NATO Media Information Centre  
 CCT – Combat Camera Team  
 JMOT – Joint Media Operations Team

LNO – liaison officer  
 NMIC – NATO Media Information Centre

**Figure 2.4 – Generic NATO Media Information Centre organisation**

2.60 Within a NATO operation or exercise the mission of an NMIC is to:

- a. Develop and integrate Mil PA plans and programmes within an overall ICP.
- b. Plan, coordinate and ensure the conduct of media activities and digital media activities in an operation or exercise theatre.
- c. Act as the primary interface between the force and the media.
- d. Act as the primary information and imagery release mechanism for the force commander, including considering OPSEC and PERSEC.
- e. Provide C2 structure for deployed JMOTs and CCTs.
- f. Act as the NATO HQ Press and Media point of contact within the operation, mission or task. The NMIC director is responsible for ensuring the SHAPE CPAO is included in all direct communications between the NMIC and NATO Press and Media.

2.61 According to the mission statement, the NMIC is capable of conducting a wide range of basic Mil PA functions. Specifically its tasks are to:

- a. Appoint a spokesperson for the joint force commander.
- b. Establish a Mil PA command structure, lines of authority and release authority within the theatre.
- c. Direct and coordinate deployed JMOTs and CCTs.
- d. Coordinate with higher HQs, subordinate units and all participating Alliance national PA/Mil PA entities.
- e. Respond to media queries and requests.
- f. Implement and oversee media guidelines and ground rules.
- g. Disseminate imagery and B-roll to media in collaboration with HN and/or national PA/Mil PA.
- h. Provide media registration.
- i. Support media monitoring and analysis, including providing post-engagement feedback, evaluation of information activities conducted by Mil PA and support for the IEA.
- j. Gather and develop Mil PA products (digital, video, imagery, print).

2.62 NMICs fulfil the requirement for a focal point for the news media during military operations. An NMIC is an FE subordinated to the CPAO, established within a NATO mission or operation to deal with the day-to-day management of media activities, specifically in response to crisis management. In essence, it is a command post for media support efforts. In addition to their role in crisis operations, NMICs are the primary Mil PA FE in NATO conflict operations, and are organised (according to top-level military plans) at both SHAPE and joint force command level. They serve as both the primary information source and as a logistical support and coordination base for media covering the operation.

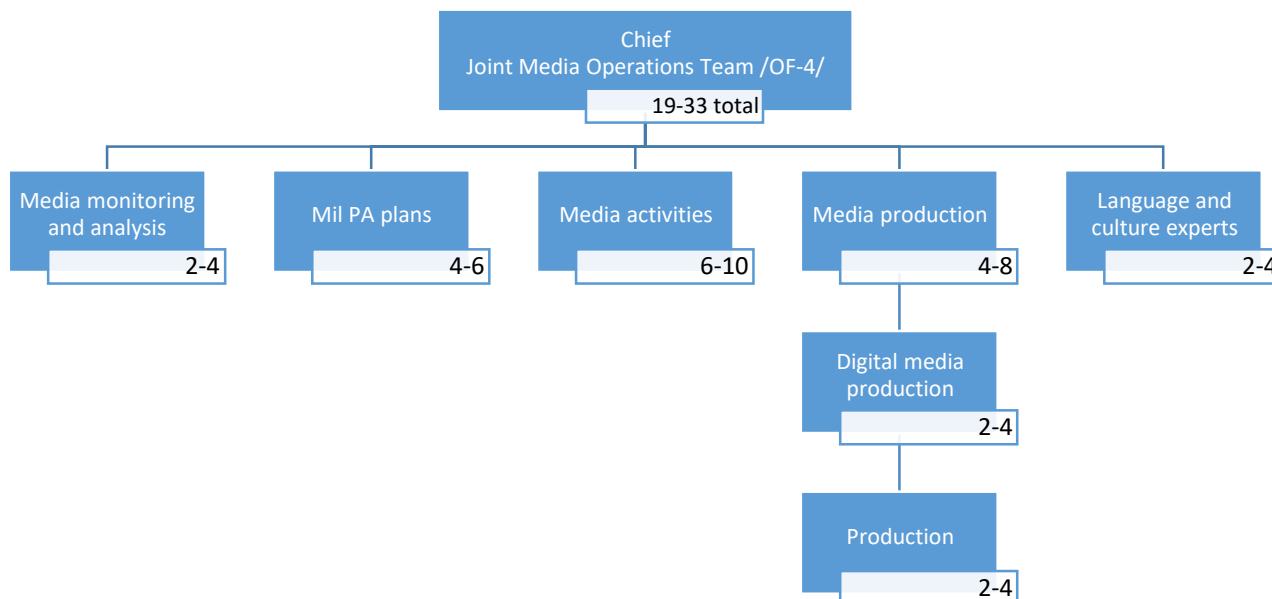
2.63 NMICs are organised when large numbers of news media representatives are anticipated to cover military activities, and may be formed for all types of operations or for any stage within an operation.

2.64 NMICs support and are responsible to the senior commander of the operation on a continuous basis. They provide the commander with a professional, immediately available, fully trained organisation designed to respond to HN, regional and international civilian media interest in NATO military operations.

2.65 NMICs are led at the OF-5 level. A recommended crisis establishment structure for an NMIC is included in the *Bi-SC PA Handbook*. The actual number of personnel is dependent on the operation, mission, activity or exercise.

### **Joint Media Operations Team**

2.66 A JMOT is a Mil PA deployable FE. It is activated for NATO missions/operations or exercises and in times of conflict. During conflict operations, JMOTs are organised and serve as the primary Mil PA FE at the corps and division level throughout the command. A JMOT can conduct a selection of Mil PA basic functions, and is subordinated to and directed either by the CPAO, if deployed, or by the NMIC director. The CPAO or NMIC director can elect to task a JMOT to provide C2 for CCTs. JMOTs are led at the OF-4 level or higher. A generic JMOT organisation chart with staffing numbers is provided in Figure 2.5.



**Figure 2.5 – Generic Joint Media Operations Team organisation**

2.67 Within a NATO operation or exercise or as part of an NMIC, the mission of a JMOT is to act as the primary interface between a force commander and the media.

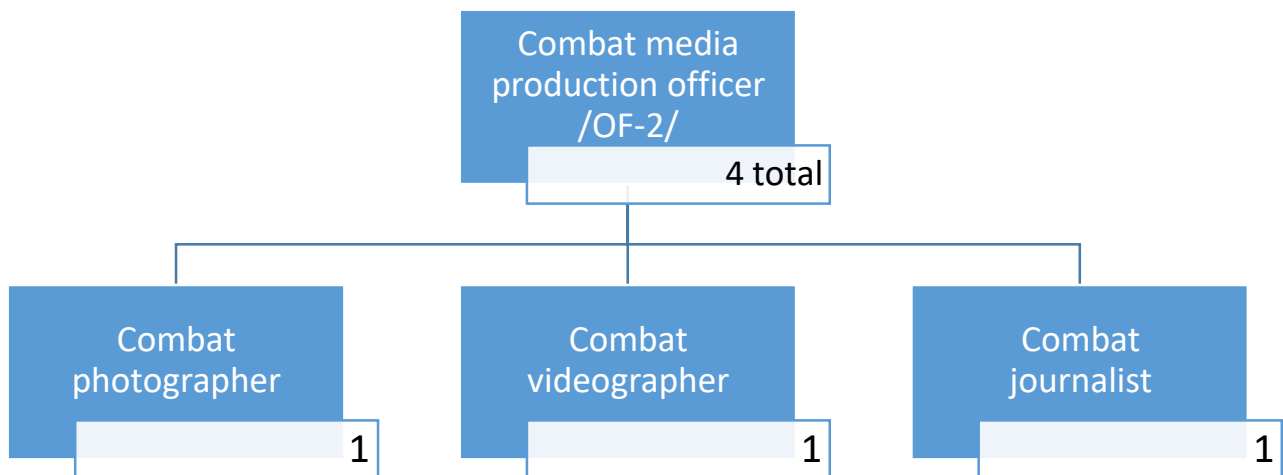
2.68 According to the mission statement, a JMOT is capable of fulfilling the following tasks:

- a. Developing plans and programmes for media activities and events.
- b. Coordinating and facilitating media coverage and embeds.
- c. Responding to media queries and requests.
- d. Preparing and conducting press briefings, news conferences, and media visits and events.
- e. Coordinating and conducting crisis communication.
- f. Facilitating interviews, declassification and release.
- g. Preparing personnel for interviews and media engagements.
- h. Establishing initial in-theatre media activities capability and a focal point for the news media until an NMIC is established.
- i. Reporting to, liaising with and supporting the NMIC.
- j. Establishing media guidelines and ground rules.
- k. Supporting media monitoring and analysis.
- l. Supporting Mil PA production, using content gathered and delivered by CCTs (digital, video, imagery, print).



## Combat Camera Team

2.69 A CCT is a Mil PA deployable FE designed to conduct media production functions. It is activated for NATO missions/operations in times of peace, crisis and conflict, as well as during exercises and activities. CCTs are subordinated to and directed either by the CPAO, if deployed, or by the NMIC director. CCTs are led at the OF-2 level or higher. A generic CCT organisation chart with staffing numbers is provided in Figure 2.6.



**Figure 2.6 – Generic Combat Camera Team organisation**

2.70 The mission of a CCT is:

- a. To accompany, document, edit and provide footage of day-to-day operations, exercises and missions for the Alliance's internal and external communications. This includes appropriate filing and archiving of imagery, audio, text and ready-to-use media packages.
- b. To produce timely content according to agreed ICPs.
- c. To produce content according to agreed design and branding guidelines.

2.71 According to the mission statement, a CCT is capable of fulfilling the following tasks:

- a. Collecting, editing, transmitting, internally and externally sharing, and archiving photography.
- b. Collecting, editing, transmitting, internally and externally sharing, and archiving video and audio products.
- c. Conducting interviews and writing and editing stories.
- d. Providing the military personnel with basic Mil PA advice related to the assigned tasks.

**Military public affairs capabilities limitations**

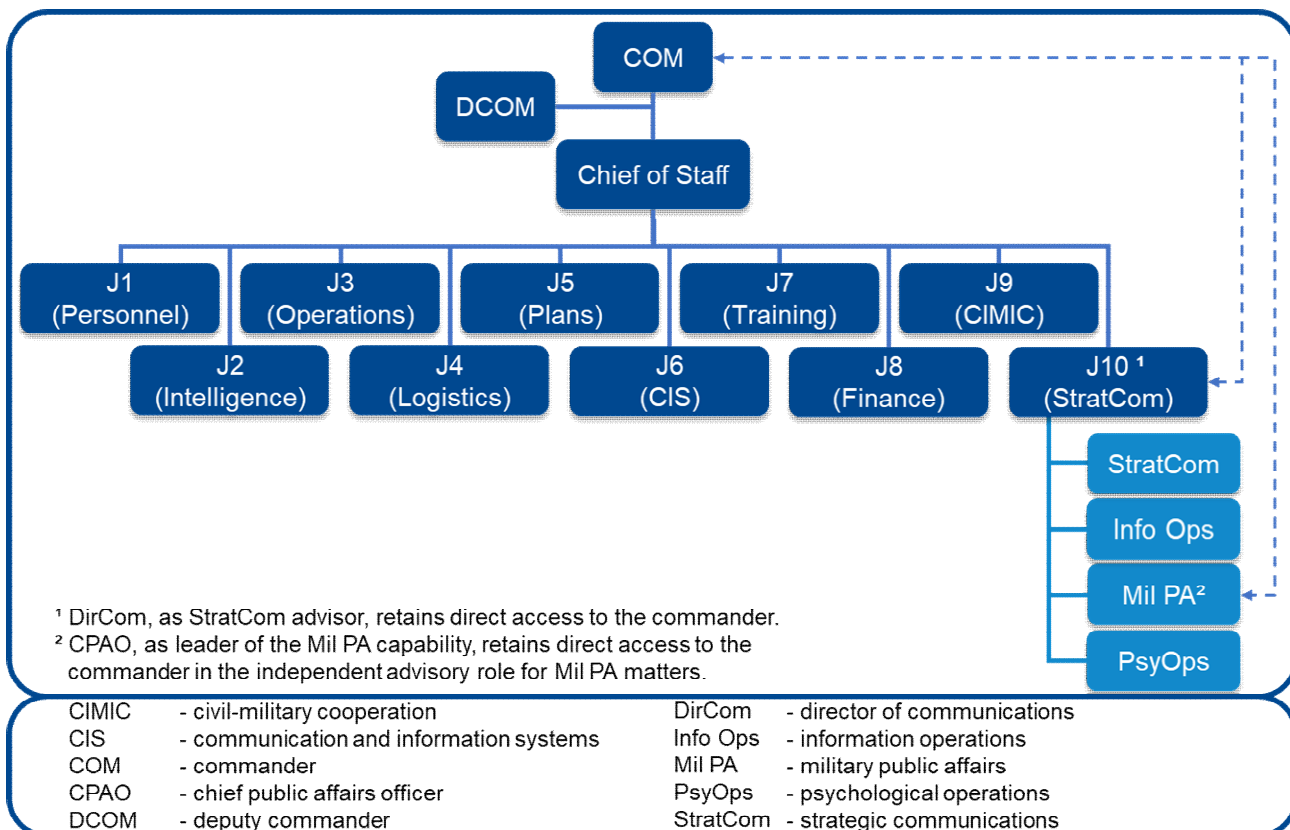
2.72 The MCR include plans and policies, media activities (operations), media monitoring and analysis, and production (writing, imagery and digital media management). These benefit from the productions collected as part of the IEA.

2.73 Mil PA capability needs to be sufficiently staffed with trained and experienced personnel and resourced to meet the operational and routine tasking tempo of the HQ and its activities.

2.74 Mil PA capabilities are deployable and sustain their respective functions according to the specific mission requirements.

## Section 4 – Command and control

**2.75 Command and control in the strategic communications staff element.** Following the *Military Policy on Public Affairs* (MC 0457) and the *Military Policy on Strategic Communications* (MC 0628) with regard to the grouping of the StratCom information function and communications capabilities, AJP-10, *Allied Joint Doctrine for Strategic Communications*, has provided an example of a StratCom directorate (or similar staff element) within a joint task force HQ to reflect the position and functional authority of the director of communications (DirCom or similar title) and the CPAO (Figure 2.7).



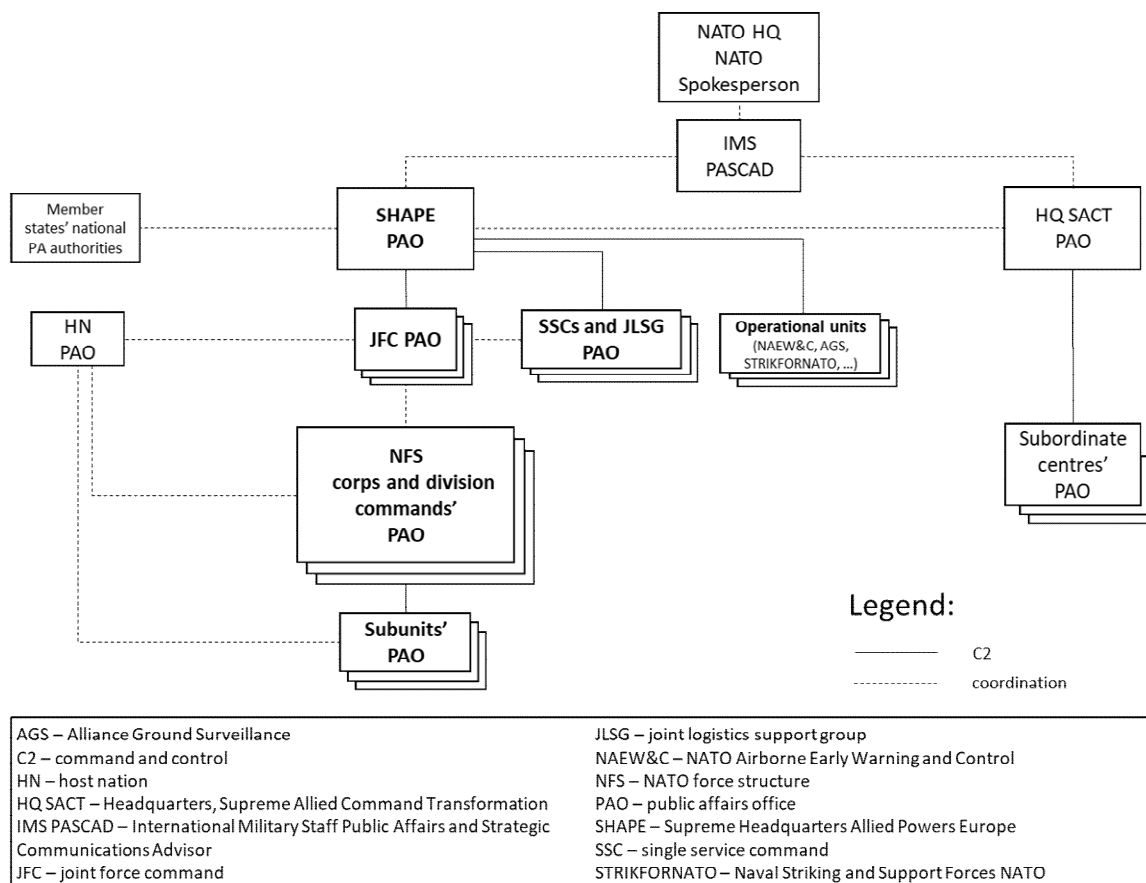
**Figure 2.7 – An example of a strategic communications directorate (or similar staff element) within a joint task force**

**2.76 Command and control of military public affairs.** The CPAO holds functional responsibility for all Mil PA matters and leads all Mil PA staff of a military HQ. Therefore, the CPAO has direct access to the commander for these matters, is a member of the commander’s principal advisors group, and remains the lead for external and internal communications. This is guaranteed by separate lines of functional authority for Mil PA (Mil PA FE/public affairs office staff – CPAO – Commander) and for PsyOps or information operations (Info Ops) (Chief PsyOps/Chief Info Ops – DirCom (or similar title) – Commander) to provide direct and unfiltered advice to a commander and senior leaders on PA implications

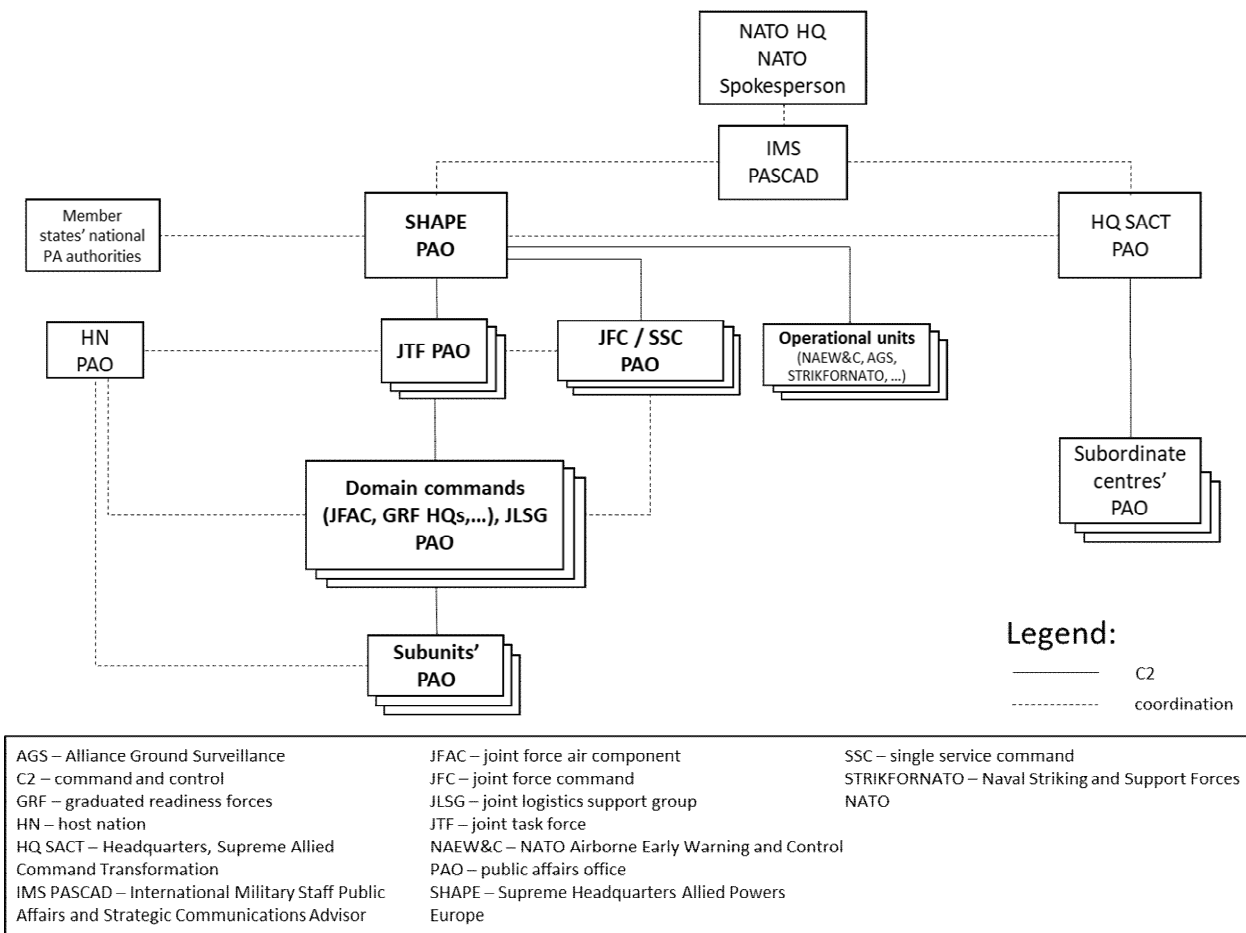
of operations, activities and issues, and to enable planning and execution of information activities conducted by Mil PA.

2.77 The CPAO also has the functional authority for assigned FEs that form Mil PA capabilities of the NMIC, JMOTs and CCTs, if/when activated (as depicted in Figure 2.10).

2.78 **Military public affairs functional line of authority.** The CPAO of a military HQ – who leads the public affairs office functions within the three main StratCom staff functions of understand and assess, plan and integrate, and communicate (as described in paragraph 3.5 in Chapter 3, Section 1, and illustrated by Figure 3.1) – acts within the Alliance’s Mil PA functional line of authority by actively communicating with higher, same level and lower HQ Mil PA, as well as with FEs, detachments and national Mil PA if needed. This ensures effective Mil PA functional direction or coordination vertically and effective functional Mil PA coordination horizontally. Liaising with Mil PA counterparts throughout the chain of command ensures the development of Alliance-wide coherent PA guidance, planning, execution and reporting. The Mil PA functional line of authority changes across the continuum of competition: its distinct peacetime flow is presented in Figure 2.8 and a crisis/conflict flow is illustrated in Figure 2.9. The functional Mil PA line of authority is determined by locations of the HQ’s public affairs offices and the type of command relationship between commands.

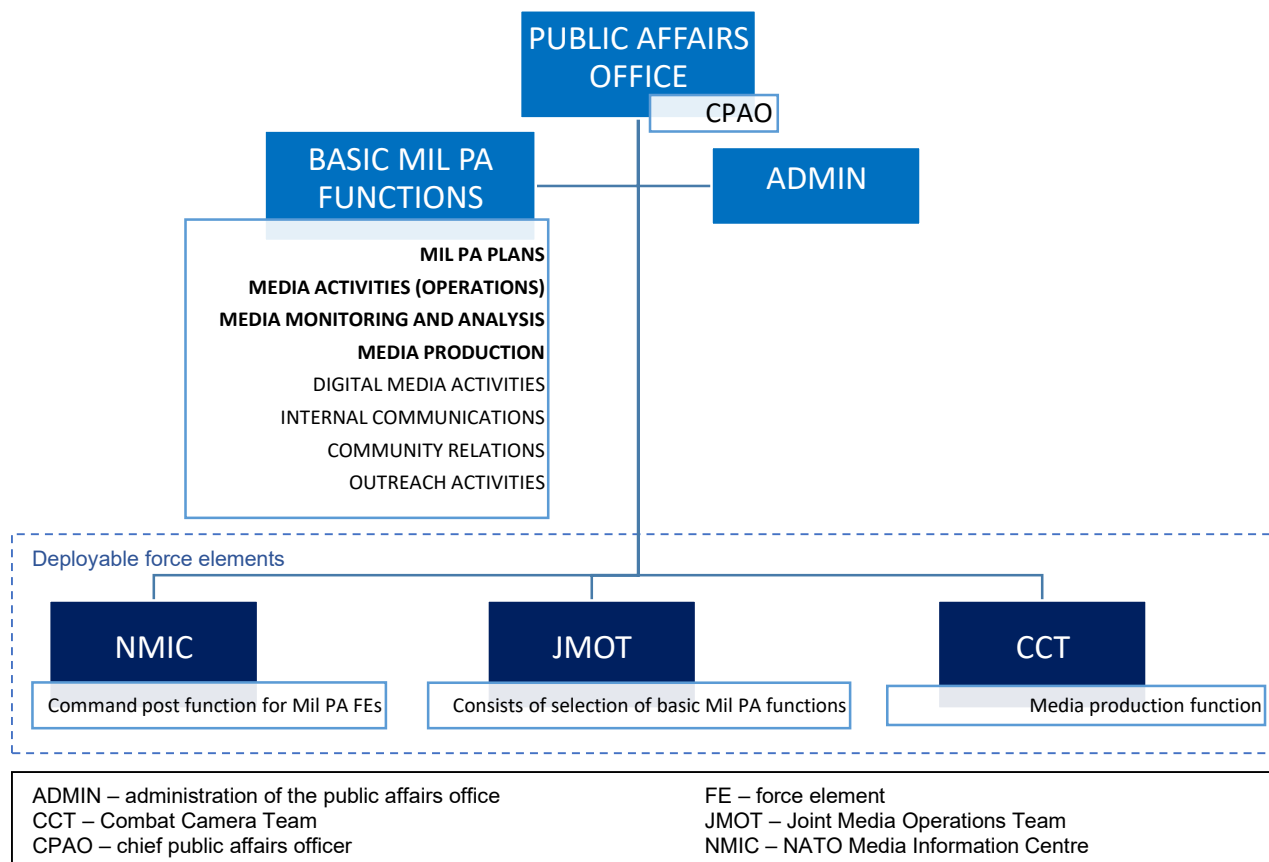


**Figure 2.8 – Military public affairs functional line of authority in peacetime**



**Figure 2.9 – Military public affairs functional line of authority in a crisis, on an operation or in times of conflict**

**2.79 Public affairs office.** The public affairs office is the Mil PA staff element of a military HQ, led by the CPAO, and is structured in a way that enables the Mil PA basic functions described in Chapter 3, Section 1. Actual staffing depends on the scale and intensity of an operation or routine activities and on the characteristics of the IE in the engagement space. A generic setup of a public affairs office that meets MCR is presented in Figure 2.10.



**Figure 2.10 – Generic setup of a public affairs office within a strategic communications staff element of a military headquarters**

**2.80 Public affairs office relationships.** A military HQ public affairs office is structurally grouped within the StratCom staff element, together with the Info Ops staff function and the PsyOps capability as a minimum.

2.81 Where a joint HQ has been formed to specifically conduct an operation, mission or task, that HQ is to adopt the same construct by establishing a public affairs office within the StratCom staff element.

2.82 This enables the synchronisation and integration of all information activities, including Mil PA plans and activities, into a military HQ's plans and activities through Info Ops (horizontally within a military HQ) and through the CPAO, DirCom (or similar title) and StratCom Plans staff officer (vertically across levels of command).

**2.83 Military public affairs tasking.** Mil PA tasking enables CPAOs of the NCS and NFS to conduct (plan and execute) information activities that create effects supporting the achievement of the commander's objectives. Mil PA organisation and relationships, reflected by its functional line of authority, is ever-evolving, adapting to the current situation across the continuum of competition; however, CPAOs must be able to exercise Mil PA tasking efficiently and effectively up, down and across the chain of command within both the NCS and NFS.

2.84 Mil PA tasking involves:

- a. Requiring Mil PA staff and other branches' staff within its own HQ to support or enable information activities conducted by Mil PA.
- b. Issuing direction and guidance or specific tasks to subordinate HQs' Mil PA staff.

2.85 Depending on the situation, the CPAO tasks Mil PA staff within its own HQ and subordinate units to plan and execute any Mil PA basic functions, to provide specific Mil PA products or to provide Mil PA FEs. Typical areas for tasking are: media activities (events; Mil PA tools and products); media production (types of subject matter materials desired: print, audio, video, web/social media); community relations; outreach activities; digital media activities; media monitoring and analysis (daily Mil PA briefs; SITREPs); direction and guidance on narrative, themes and messages, timings, release authority or Mil PA approach, deriving from the current SCF and annexed strategic communications implementation guidance, ICP and PAG.

2.86 Depending on the situation, the CPAO works with other command staff branches to encourage and support information activities conducted by Mil PA in the execution phase: to provide required materials, facilities, logistics, security and protection or escort personnel. This ensures formal incorporation of information activities conducted by Mil PA into HQ joint staff current operations.

2.87 Depending on the situation, Mil PA tasking is incorporated into the commander's:

- a. PAG or Appendix 3 – Mil PA to Annex SS – StratCom to OPLAN.<sup>22</sup>
- b. ICP or Annex SS – StratCom to OPLAN.
- c. Operation order, fragmentary order or other commander's tasking document appropriate for current operations and exercises.

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<sup>22</sup> Refer to Annex A for the template of Appendix 3 – Mil PA.

## Chapter 3 – Military public affairs activities

### Section 1 – Functional areas

3.1 **Military public affairs as an enabler of the information joint function.** The joint function framework uses of a combination of manoeuvre, fires, information and CIMIC to affect the audience's attitude and behaviour. It is 'informed and directed' by the joint functions of command and control and intelligence, and 'supported' by the joint functions sustainment and force protection. The information function helps commanders and staff applying (or using) information, while integrating with other functions, to influence perceptions, behaviour, and decision-making. Military public affairs (Mil PA), in leading external and internal communications,<sup>23</sup> is a key enabler of the joint function of information within the framework of strategic communications (StratCom).<sup>24</sup>

3.2 Until strategic competition reaches a point necessitating military operations, Mil PA is the only military communication capability being employed to conduct external communications. Mil PA is integrated as a key enabler at the start of the planning processes and supports ongoing military operations, and its activities are consistent with the narrative and oriented by the military objectives and desired enduring conditions. Coordination is also required to ensure that other activities by the joint force do not undermine activities in the information environment (IE) and vice versa.

3.3 Actors' perceptions within the operating environment (OE) is dependent on information available to them. Agility and proactive action in the IE is critical to operational success. Mil PA hence plans and executes external and internal communications in accordance with military HQ staff planning or decision-making processes.

3.4 **Basic functions of military public affairs.** As the lead for external and internal communications,<sup>25</sup> Mil PA provides commanders and staffs with appropriate Mil PA advice, and coordinates and synchronises information activities in support of commanders' objectives across the continuum of competition. Mil PA plans and executes the following basic functions:

- a. **Media activities.**<sup>26</sup> Media activities are information activities conducted by Mil PA that enable communication with a wide variety of audiences through engagement with the media. Commanders and staffs, through their public affairs offices, are prepared to respond to media queries, issue statements, conduct briefings and interviews, arrange for media access to permanent and operational units, and distribute information through

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<sup>23</sup> MC 0457, *NATO Military Policy on Public Affairs*, and MC 0628, *NATO Military Policy on Strategic Communications*.

<sup>24</sup> Further information on the joint functions framework can be found in AJP-3, *Allied Joint Doctrine for the Conduct of Operations*, and in AJP-10, *Allied Joint Doctrine for Strategic Communications*.

<sup>25</sup> External communications, considered here as the broad function of communicating with external audiences, includes media activities, outreach activities, community relations and digital media activities.

<sup>26</sup> The terms 'media activities' derived from MC 0457 and 'media operations' used in AJP-10 refer to the same military public affairs function.



the traditional media, as a means to develop relations with the purveyors and consumers of news.

b. **Internal communications.** Internal communications are a command responsibility and Mil PA is the lead function responsible for supporting the chain of command in executing it. Internal communications efforts facilitate communication with and among NATO military and civilian personnel and their families. Internal communications inform the internal audience about the command, its people and its activities, and are distinct from administrative information or direction from the chain of command that can be found in administrative or routine orders. Effective programmes keep internal audiences informed about significant developments that affect them at work; create an awareness of the organisation's goals and activities; and make command personnel more effective representatives of the organisation.

c. **Outreach activities.**<sup>27</sup> Outreach efforts aim to foster strategic relations with key external stakeholders and influencers – such as think tanks; academics; community leaders, including representatives of non-governmental organisations; youth and women's organisations; and other actors outside the traditional security scope – that can support the Alliance's transformative efforts to out-partner and out-think the adversarial forces, if any. The external stakeholders are often invited to comment as unbiased subject matter experts in the field of security and defence policy, and more specifically on NATO policy, decisions and actions, and can therefore provide a sustainable 'force multiplier' effect.

d. **Community relations.** Community relations programmes are associated with the interaction between NATO military installations in NATO nations and their surrounding civilian communities. These programmes address issues of interest to and foster relations with the public.

e. **Digital media activities.**<sup>28</sup> Digital media activities provide information directly to audiences through online and digital media channels. Delivering successful communications campaigns for NATO requires an understanding of the wider StratCom goals, and the provision of support with effective digital media products which are also compliant with NATO branding. Digital media must not simply broadcast information, but foster engagement with all stakeholders involved, existing supporters and broader potential audiences. Mil PA exclusively conducts digital media activities via official NATO channels which are addressed at Allied and multinational audiences outside areas of operations.

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<sup>27</sup> The function 'Strategic engagement and outreach' in AJP-10 paragraph 12.c.(3) involves the two separate military public affairs functions of community relations and outreach activities. Information activities conducted by military public affairs are distinct from other strategic engagement activities, as they are aimed continuously at all relevant audiences across the continuum of competition.

<sup>28</sup> The terms 'digital media activities' derived from MC 0457 and 'digital engagement' derived from AJP-10 paragraph 4.12.c.(4) refer to same military public affairs function.

f. **Media production.** The media production function supports the conduct of internal and external communications and includes (but is not limited to) the production of images, videos and written public affairs (PA) products (e.g., photos, live broadcasts, posters, backgrounders, infographics). Media production refers to all activities involved in selecting, commissioning, preparing and editing information using audio, visual and/or multimedia technologies.

g. **Media monitoring and analysis.** Media monitoring and analysis provides early warning and analysis of news, assesses the media environment (ME) to help prepare communications plans, and provides post-engagement feedback and evaluation. It uses both internal and external tools, as well as human analysis, to understand the media space through quantitative and qualitative disaggregated data. In doing so, those performing this function liaise closely with other staff functions such as cyberspace operations, intelligence, information operations (Info Ops) and others contributing to the information environment assessment (IEA), as well as with higher and lower commands.

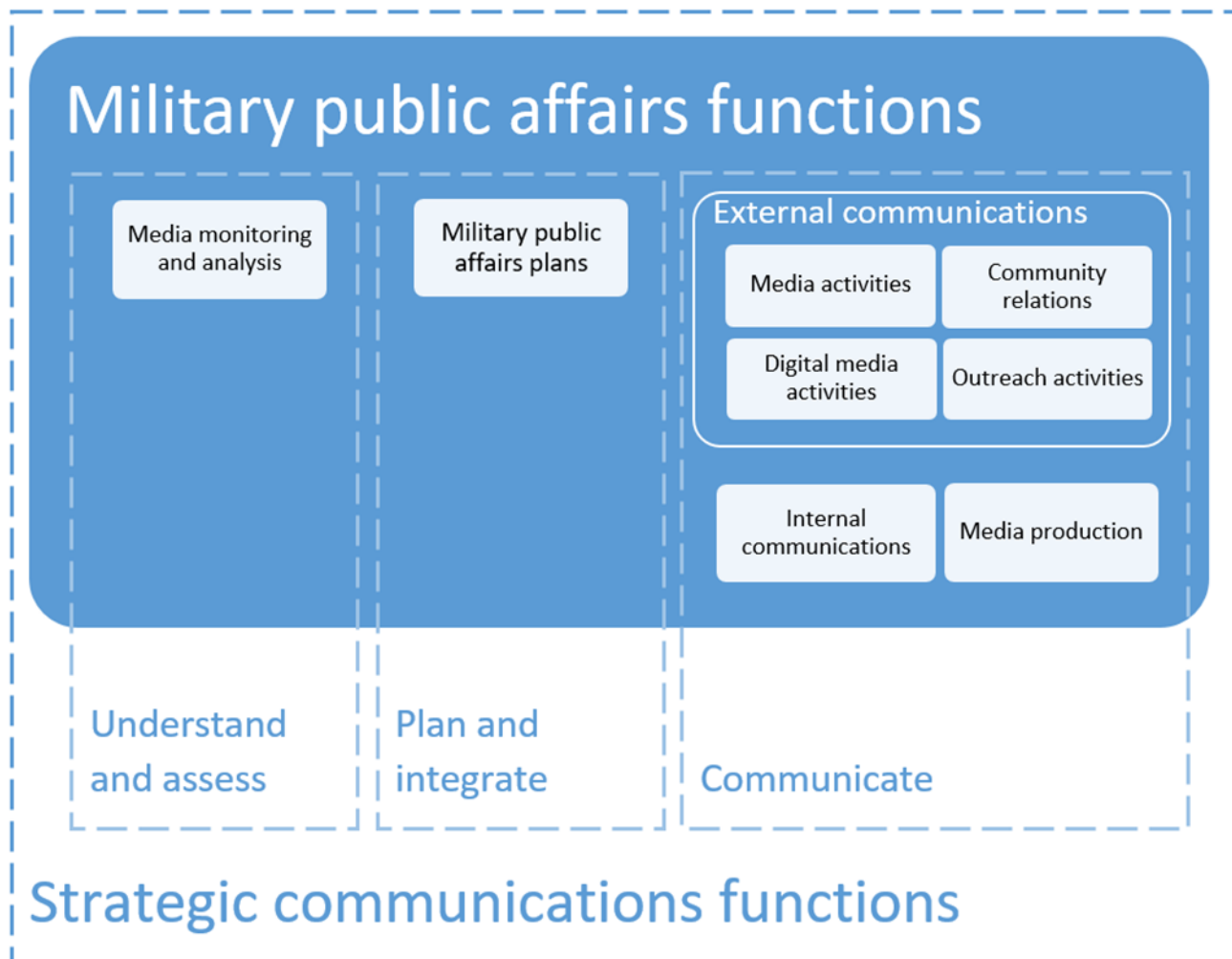
h. **Military public affairs plans.** The Mil PA plans function aims at planning Mil PA capability activities in accordance with higher headquarters (HQ) direction and guidance (received through StratCom planning processes and through its own functional line of authority); production of planning inputs to the operations planning process and decision-making process, which involves working group and board participation; issuing guidance to lower-level military HQ Mil PA; synchronisation and integration of its own plans with whole HQ plans (through Info Ops processes).

**3.5 Military public affairs functional integration into strategic communications.** Mil PA functions are an inherent part of the three main StratCom functions, as depicted in Figure 3.1, which explains to Mil PA staff where their activities fit in military HQ integrated communications.<sup>29</sup>

**3.6 Adherence to military public affairs functional constraint and restraint.** The director of communications (or similar title) and chief public affairs officer (CPAO) in their respective functional areas' independent advisory roles ensure that StratCom direction and guidance does not inhibit Mil PA principles while reinforcing integrated communications.

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<sup>29</sup> Adjacent functions of information operations and psychological operations have been omitted for clarity.



**Figure 3.1 – Military public affairs basic functions and their integration into strategic communications functions**

## Section 2 – Application in the different engagement spaces

3.7 The engagement space (or battlespace), as part of the OE, is where actions and activities are planned and conducted.

3.8 The OE as the overarching construct aids the commander and staff's understanding of the mission, and their force's part of the overall strategy. The OE provides the surroundings of a mission and combines all the elements, conditions, circumstances and influences of applicable factors that affect a commander's decision-making in accomplishing their mission.

3.9 Permeating the OE and engagement space, the IE is a diverse global environment where humans and automated systems observe, orient, decide and act on data, information and knowledge. To shape that environment, a joint task force coordinates all of its messages and deconflicts or even integrates those messages with Allies' respective national messaging as part of the ongoing alignment to maintain unity of effort and stand out in a saturated IE. The IE is the aggregate of individuals, organisations and systems that collect, process, disseminate or act on information. It is characterised by ubiquitous on-demand media and interpersonal hyperconnectivity that enables collaboration and information sharing on an unprecedented scale.<sup>30</sup>

3.10 In the complexity of the IE the different media agencies and traditional and digital media (including social media) exist and operate, and are understood as the ME for Allied joint forces operations. Mil PA is responsible for the communication in the ME. Opportunities and vulnerabilities associated with media activities change for joint forces as the ME changes. Mil PA manages them dynamically and is capable of operating effectively in a degraded and a highly sophisticated ME.

3.11 Information in the public domain is part of the IE and human environment, and thus affects the OE and influences operations. Official communication with any audience could play a relevant role in shaping the OE. Mil PA is a key enabler for the commander to build and maintain essential relationships. Commanders carefully evaluate how various friendly, enemy, adversary and neutral actions, images and words impact planned and ongoing operations. Mil PA understands that various audiences have differing information needs, and works closely with other information providers to ensure consistency of messaging and accuracy of content. By conveying the facts about joint force activities in a proactive manner, Mil PA helps the NATO force commanders to impact the IE, particularly as it relates to public support.

3.12 Especially for Mil PA, the respective engagement space is often broader than any defined operations area due to the increasing interconnectivity of the IE. Furthermore, the varying degrees of relevance that geography has in cyberspace and space, the electromagnetic spectrum and with regard to the IE mean that a geographically bounded engagement space is not suitable for Mil PA. Thus, the engagement space is increasingly

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<sup>30</sup> The information environment is explained in detail in AJP-10.1, *Allied Joint Doctrine for Information Operations*, along with the associated understanding and assessment process: the information environment assessment.

cluttered, and the compression of the level of operations means that the engagement space encompasses activities from all levels of operations, and from across the political, military and civilian spectrum, which Mil PA has to take into account.

3.13 The commander can appropriately influence the engagement space through coherent and comprehensive information activities. This can be done by early integration of Mil PA in the planning process, which allows possible information activities to be effectively considered (as described in Chapter 4, Section 1). Another important role of Mil PA is to identify, measure and evaluate implications of information activities within the engagement space that the commander does not directly control. Media analysis or assessment of products and activities using various open sources, in close cooperation with classified information collection sources, provides updates to the IEA for the relevant engagement space (as described in Chapter 3, Section 1).

## Section 3 – Other considerations

### Crisis communication

3.14 **Communication crisis** (abbreviated in common language by PA practitioners as simply a crisis): an event that creates or threatens to create harshly negative media coverage and/or audience activities that could damage in the short term the reputation or future viability of an organisation.

3.15 **Communication issue** (abbreviated in common language by PA practitioners as simply an issue): an external or internal factor – usually lasting over the mid to long term – that could represent a serious obstacle to achieving an organisation’s objectives and cause damage to its reputation if not managed well. Any issue could potentially escalate into a crisis.

3.16 **Crisis communication.**<sup>31</sup> External and/or internal communication planned and executed by Mil PA to mitigate risks of and/or to respond to a crisis.

3.17 Effective crisis communication<sup>32</sup> is a common aspect of information activities conducted by Mil PA across the continuum of competition, as there is always a probability (ranging from low to high) of a communication crisis occurring. Therefore, crisis communication forms an integral part of the Mil PA campaigning mindset. It consists of two phases:

- a. A preparatory phase, before an actual crisis or issue breaks out and gains media interest, when Mil PA identifies potential issues or crises, produces crisis communication plans and pre-emptively coordinates a military HQ communication response to them.
- b. A response phase, after an issue or crisis has occurred, when Mil PA proactively updates the response plan and informs audiences accordingly in a timely and accurate manner about the nature of the issue or crisis and the military HQ response to it.

3.18 Mil PA crisis communications are evaluated on a case-by-case basis and assessed on level of intensity (e.g., from low to high). However, communication issues with the potential to attract negative or intense media attention must be reported through the Mil PA coordination/functional line of authority and through the chain of command with a proposed plan of action to mitigate the situation as soon as possible by the most efficient means. If the information can only be shared via secure means, to avoid delays public affairs officers (PAOs) advise their higher HQ using an unclassified connection that an issue is ongoing.

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<sup>31</sup> This is a new definition proposal submitted to the NATO Terminology Office via terminology tracking file 2023-0016 for NATO Agreed status.

<sup>32</sup> Crisis communication is synonymous with crisis management of a communication crisis/issue. However, to avoid confusion with the general term ‘crisis management’ (employment of a whole-of-Alliance approach with other partners to manage confrontations in the continuum of competition) used in NATO military doctrine (see AJP-01, *Allied Joint Doctrine*), military public affairs doctrine uses the term ‘crisis communication’, which is a common term among public affairs practitioners.

**3.19 Crisis communication as part of the military public affairs planning process.** Issue and crisis communication is a significant part of the PA planning process. It consists of processes of identifying a potential issue or crisis and of coordinating an organisation's response.

- a. Issues and crises occur routinely. The key to mitigating the negative impact is, first, to understand the underlying problem and the interests of actors and stakeholders involved; second, to solve the problem; and third, to communicate the organisation's understanding and intent to address the underlying problem to key audiences and to communicate the organisation's actions effectively. Managing the underlying issue is the commander's responsibility, with Mil PA acting in a supporting role to communicate to audiences. Without effective management of the central issue, Mil PA cannot be effective and the organisation may lose credibility.
- b. When dealing with an issue, an organisation must proactively keep audiences informed of its actions in a timely and accurate manner. Poorly managed communications erode an organisation's credibility, undermine public confidence and contribute to the emergence of crises. Properly managed communication strategies entail coordinated responses emphasising the identification and reporting of actual or potential issues and problems, taking action to address issues effectively and in a timely manner, and keeping audiences informed of what is being done to address the issues.
- c. Specific issues are monitored to assess the potential impact on the organisation, to determine any changes in public opinion on major issues and to provide commanders with regular assessments of public opinion relating to such issues. Media analysis and opinion polls are examples of means to track issues. Because public opinion is an imprecise prediction of behaviour, issue tracking must be a dynamic process carried out over time.
- d. When faced with an issue or crisis, Mil PA ensures that the requirement to inform the public is not delayed by the search for solutions. Instead, the problem is acknowledged and the public informed immediately of the corrective actions being considered. Mil PA needs to be involved in the crisis information flow within HQ and the use of the crisis communication plan by key stakeholders. Audiences are kept informed of developments as they occur – if media interest is expected and there is no constraint on operational security, policy, privacy, propriety or higher guidance, Mil PA proactively informs the media, tells them what is known and not known, and tells them when they can expect more answers. In most cases an organisation has less than an hour to respond to public and media queries before it loses credibility. A response stating 'We're looking into it and will get back to you shortly' is better than saying nothing at all.
- e. Operations security must be enforced at all times. When dealing with an issue or a crisis, PA activities must never undermine the safety of military personnel engaged in a military operation, or the success of a military operation or activity. Permanent military HQ and deployed HQ have an issues/crisis management team, of which the PAO is an

integral part. The time to decide who needs to be part of this team is not in the middle of a crisis.<sup>33</sup>

### **Military public affairs products and tools**

3.20 Mil PA uses different tools and products to support, facilitate and/or leverage its own information activities. The Mil PA tools are broad instruments used for Mil PA staff work, not releasable outside the Mil PA line of authority, and aim at a better understanding of the IE and the planning of information activities conducted by Mil PA and their integration into the overall military HQ activities. The Mil PA products are the physical or digital deliverables cleared for public release to internal and external audiences that accompany Mil PA internal or external communications in the execution phase.

3.21 **Military public affairs products.** Mil PA develops PA products and releases them to audiences to support its own information activities through different media or direct public engagements.

3.22 All Mil PA products adhere to the NATO branding guidelines as determined and issued by NATO HQ Public Diplomacy Division.

3.23 The following products, while not an exhaustive list, are some of the more common Mil PA releasable products:<sup>34</sup>

- news release;
- media advisory;
- statement (news conference, video, news release formats);
- press kit;
- fact sheet and/or infographic;
- imagery, still and/or video, including B-roll package;
- town hall meeting (for staff or with the local community) package;
- letter to newspaper editor;
- briefing package/presentation;
- email or all users message;
- social media post/message;
- electronic newsletter, either intra- or internet;
- noticeboard/screen (for important messages and updates for staff);
- exhibition/display;
- 'hometown' (photo and story of military members sent to their home-town newspapers);
- leaflet/brochure/trifold/pamphlet;
- podcast;
- publication, either internal or external.

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<sup>33</sup> Refer to the *Bi-SC PA Handbook* for detailed guidance on crisis communication.

<sup>34</sup> Refer to the *Bi-SC PA Handbook* for further guidance on product details and preparation.



**3.24 Military public affairs tools.** Mil PA uses tools for internal work and preparation of its own information activities. These are releasable to neither internal nor external audiences, but only within the Mil PA line of authority and the chain of command. The following tools, while not an exhaustive list, are some of the more common internal Mil PA tools and outputs:<sup>35</sup>

- media monitoring and analysis outputs: news review, news update briefing, event feedback, ME analysis, media audience analysis, country media review;
- talking points or lines to take/media response lines;
- public affairs guidance;
- media engagement prep for background discussions, media roundtables, news conferences, interviews;
- Mil PA plan, fragmentary order, Mil PA appendix to the operation plan;
- pocket card (for internal communications – command information);
- media queries tracker.

### **Military public affairs release of information policy**

3.25 The commander is the most credible spokesperson for the mission or HQ. PAOs advise and prepare the commander in preparation for media interviews or public engagements. Commanders, as advised by CPAOs, balance the media's need for fast, accurate information with the demands of operations security (OPSEC) and personnel security (PERSEC) to determine what information to publicly release within established release procedures and priorities.

3.26 Mil PA ensures a balance between the principles of openness and transparency against the principles of OPSEC and PERSEC for NATO operations. In respecting the principles of OPSEC and PERSEC, no Mil PA activity shall undermine the safety of personnel involved in a military operation, mission or activity, or the likely success of a NATO operation or activity.

3.27 Mil PA decides on its approach for each activity or situation on a case-by-case basis. Mil PA is attentive to the public and external/internal audience interest, and can choose between being very active (investing significant and deliberate effort in communication), active (investing routine effort in promoting public awareness) or reactive (when little to no public interest is anticipated, where OPSEC, PERSEC, policy, privacy, propriety or higher guidance indicates that an active or proactive approach is not appropriate, or when full disclosure is not yet possible, for instance on the basis of pre-decisional topics).

3.28 The CPAO, or designated military spokesperson as approved by the commander and/or CPAO, engages the media in an official capacity, 'on the record' and with full attribution. Military spokespersons must be trained and knowledgeable, and communicate within their lanes and responsibilities.

3.29 Military PAOs and commanders speaking to the media do so on the record. To that end, every effort is made to allow journalists to see a full range of activities undertaken in support

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<sup>35</sup> Refer to the *Bi-SC PA Handbook* for further guidance on tool development and use.

of the mission or training, including mission preparations and debriefings, and to speak to people who can explain NATO's position. Some of these discussions are on and others off the record. Staff are always aware that even if a discussion is off the record, no classified information is to be shared with journalists.

3.30 Military personnel are responsible for comments made to the media and coordinate with the public affairs office prior to agreeing to an interview. Where the situation does not permit prior approval, military personnel alert Mil PA staff regarding any interviews as soon as possible following the activity. Military personnel do not conduct interviews anonymously or provide information to the media 'off the record' without permission of the CPAO.

3.31 NATO military personnel and civilians may generally speak to the media regarding their roles, missions and tasks, but such engagements are coordinated with the relevant CPAO. They are not permitted to offer their personal opinions on Alliance policies or procedures, nor shall they comment regarding topics of a political or national nature to the media. Under no circumstances shall anyone release sensitive or classified information to the media. If done inadvertently, the person shall inform the chain of command and public affairs office immediately.

### **Military public affairs training**

3.32 The success of Mil PA is heavily dependent on the competence of individuals. This criterion includes ability, knowledge, understanding, capability, interaction, experience and motivation. To achieve effective Mil PA, all personnel must have the required education and training, initially at the national level and then enhanced by NATO.

3.33 Allied Strategic Communications Publication ASCP-01, *NATO Strategic Communications Training Standards*, outlines the minimum level of proficiency for all personnel assigned to positions within NATO Mil PA to ensure Allies understand the competency and experience standards required to serve in these positions.

3.34 This NATO standardisation agreement utilises the terms BASIC (national responsibility) and ADVANCED (NATO responsibility) training. It also defines the minimum collective training standards for the NATO StratCom capabilities defined in the two strategic commands' capability codes and capability statements.

3.35 ASCP-01 has been developed in response to the increasing recognition of a state of strategic competition, and a determined effort by adversaries to undermine the rules-based order. Its implementation enables a more effective Alliance response to hybrid and non-linear threats.

### **Lessons learned**

3.36 The NATO lessons learned (LL) process encompasses activities relating to learning from experience to achieve improvements. Learning is an essential part of being credible, capable and adaptive in warfighting and warfare development. A mature and fully functional LL capability is crucial to the success of ongoing and future NATO operations and exercises

and to the transformation of all NATO entities. The NATO LL process does not replace but supports the normal staffing of lessons through the chain of command.

3.37 Lessons can be derived from any activity: operations, exercises, training and daily events. Mil PA staff needs to be involved and contribute to the LL process by submitting observations for organisational learning from its activities. The NATO Lessons Learned Portal (NLLP) is the single NATO tool for collection, managing, tracking, monitoring and sharing of lessons.

3.38 If considered relevant to be staffed and shared in accordance with the LL process to become a lesson learned or best practice, all observations related to Mil PA are staffed and inserted in the NLLP.

## Chapter 4 – Military public affairs contribution to operations

### Section 1 – Contribution to headquarters staff planning processes

4.1 Military public affairs (Mil PA) within a communications directorate (or similar staff element) retains the functional responsibility for public affairs (PA) matters and communication with/through the media. To fulfil that responsibility, Mil PA performs an internal planning function for its current operations that are nested within the strategic communications (StratCom) plan and integrate function and, as an information-related capability, executes its own activities in the framework of the StratCom communicate function. Simultaneously Mil PA is involved in military headquarters (HQ) medium- and long-term planning activities, which contribute to the overall synchronisation of all military activities conducted across the continuum of competition. Regardless of the planning horizon, Mil PA faces similar sets of planning considerations and requirements.

#### Military public affairs planning requirements

4.2 NATO ensures that Allied communications are aligned throughout levels of command and synchronised with all joint functions to improve the effects that help attain the desired end state. Strategic communications frameworks (SCFs) are the primary tool used by NATO to provide direction and guidance for the planning and execution of all activities. The generic structure of a framework is articulated in Allied Joint Publication (AJP)-10, *Allied Joint Doctrine for Strategic Communications*. SCFs are constructed and implemented from the earliest stage by StratCom staff at every level of command. Frameworks are supported by strategic communications implementation guidance (SIG) with an integrated communication plan (ICP) and public affairs guidance (PAG), specifically for the Mil PA functional area, as annexes. Linking guidance from the higher HQ and objectives allows Mil PA practitioners to select the desired Mil PA approach for the campaign/operation and direct subordinate HQ or unit Mil PA.

4.3 The chief public affairs officer (CPAO) ensures the development of Mil PA plans that are clear, flexible and consistent with the guidance for the command or operation. Mil PA planners can use these plans to specify requirements for different resources: Mil PA facilities, personnel, equipment, transportation assets and communication assets. Mil PA personnel and equipment can be transported on military and commercial transportation means, such as vehicles, aircraft or ships. The volume and diversity of media assets shape the organisation of permanent or deployable Mil PA staff or force elements (FEs).

4.4 Early involvement of Mil PA in the planning process ensures that a commander's PA intent is addressed and integrated into the planning. It also ensures the required resources are incorporated into the mission service support requirements. Transportation, equipment, security, access and other resources are rarely 'owned' by Mil PA and must be allocated or tasked to support information activities conducted by Mil PA.

4.5 Full integration into the staff and planning processes is the chosen method for Mil PA to ensure such assets are allocated:

- a. **Facilities.** The command's Mil PA staff is located within the HQ element. If an independent location is required, it should be in a secure location with convenient access to the media. Specific requirements may include unclassified work areas, separate work areas (if in a second location), broadcast and transmission capability (including wireless connectivity), equipment storage, production (imagery, video, writing) facilities, access to helicopter zones and vehicle parking.
- b. **Personnel.** In the current information environment (IE), most public affairs offices are a 'high demand, low density' asset. Operations planning addresses options regarding this challenge. Augmentation from linguists, cultural advisors, and garrison or reserve units is considered. The force generation process shall guarantee a fully staffed Mil PA office of the HQ and subordinate Mil PA FEs: NATO Media Information Centre (NMIC), Joint Media Operations Teams (JMOTs) and Combat Camera Teams (CCTs), if needed.
- c. **Equipment.** Mission requirements drive equipment requirements. Mil PA planners identify their equipment requirements for each contingency and then identify who provides it – for example, audio, video and still imagery equipment, and mobile devices capable of supplying internet access to transmit Mil PA products and conduct social media communications. Maintenance and services essential to sustain the resource packages shall also be considered.
- d. **Transportation.** Mil PA personnel and equipment are as mobile as other operational forces to create the desired effects. Transportation assets may include dedicated spaces in vehicles, aircraft and ships for media/journalist movements. Transportation assets may also include personnel and equipment to service operational or logistical tasks and force protection assets for hostile/unsecured areas.
- e. **Communications/signals.** A number of communication requirements depend on bandwidth and connections available. Examples include land telephone lines with international access, secure communications, mobile radios and phones, still imagery and video, dubbing equipment and satellite uplinks. Having a variety of devices capable of live or near real-time dissemination is desirable for timely transmission of PA products and increased PA effectiveness.
- f. **Other support.** Mil PA staff may require specialised support or contracting for goods and services not available within NATO. This may include contracts for publications; services and equipment to support production or analysis and assessment; maintenance and service for supportability; and translation and interpretation services.

4.6 **Use case scenarios for public affairs planning.** Across the continuum of competition, Mil PA staff, maintaining the campaigning mindset, plans its activities to be executed in many different circumstances. Therefore, Mil PA cognisant of a particular context and requirements performs planning for:

a. **A specific issue or event.** Events arise that require separate PA planning to ensure successful execution. These events may be tied into larger strategic issues but require focused attention in the short to medium term. Categories of Mil PA planning might include timings of media advisories, photographic and video support, news releases, media events and facilitation, preparation of subject matter experts (SMEs) and handling interview requests, development of media response lines and talking points (TPs). This is considered the everyday life of Mil PA practitioners and reflects basic functions of Mil PA. Issue/event planning may also form building blocks for longer-term or larger-scale PA event planning, e.g., for an operation, mission, campaign or exercise.

b. **Operation.** Mil PA of an HQ conducting an operation/mission takes part in the planning process of that HQ. Although all operations are unique, their planning can be approached in the same manner. AJP-5, *Allied Joint Doctrine for the Planning of Operations*,<sup>36</sup> presents an overarching framework of the key planning principles, considerations and processes that are followed in the planning of operations. It describes how planning activities and processes are integrated and coordinated to support decision-making and the production of plans, orders and directives. It focuses on the operational level, although it also has utility at the strategic and tactical levels.

c. **Crisis communication.** Unforeseen events are sometimes so serious or severe that they challenge the future or legitimacy of an HQ. In these circumstances the crisis must be managed before it becomes overwhelming. Crisis communication planning considerations are provided in Chapter 3, Section 3.

d. **Contingency.** Potential events or problems identified during the planning process can be addressed in contingency planning. For instance, if an operation is conducted in an area known for earthquakes, the planners can develop contingency plans to deal with such an event, should it happen. Having a plan on the shelf assists in rapidly addressing problems and can keep such emergencies from developing into a crisis. Contingencies are ranked by probability and by severity. An event which has a very high likelihood of occurring but little to no impact on the operation or public opinion is ranked as a low priority for planning. Conversely, high-probability severe events are given the planners' immediate attention.

4.7 **Provision of higher headquarters public affairs guidance.** Operational-level military HQs receive from Allied Command Operations (ACO) the tier 2 SCF to which the SIG, ICP and PAG are annexed, if needed (outside NATO operations/missions, for operations PAG may be in the form of the operation plan (OPLAN) Mil PA Appendix to Annex SS for StratCom). As military HQs at every level should for each SCF issue its SIG (with ICP and PAG annexed) to the staff and subordinate HQ, the Mil PA staff analyses received guidance from the higher HQ and develops the PAG (which may be in the form of an OPLAN Mil PA Appendix) for subordinate HQs, task forces or FEs. The operational HQ PAG provides

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<sup>36</sup> AJP-5, *Allied Joint Doctrine for the Planning of Operations*, contains overarching doctrine for level-2 and level-3 doctrine publications.

additional granularity of PA direction, guidance and considerations for its engagement space not provided in a tier 2 PAG: this identifies, reprioritises and contextualises information activities to support the objectives of its own SIG/ICP and to support the information environment assessment (IEA).

4.8 It is imperative that the higher HQ keeps the subordinate commands informed of planning progress to ensure that parallel and collaborative planning takes place. Without this critical step, the subordinate command might have to react to the higher HQ's intent without the necessary preparations. A good guide is the 'one third, two thirds' rule, by which the higher HQ takes one third of the time prior to the start of the operation to develop its plan. By providing as much information as possible through warning orders and open communication early in the process, the subordinate commands have even more time and insight to ensure they can fulfil the higher HQ's intent, as well as provide advice to the higher HQ, if required.

4.9 Within staffing and resource constraints, Mil PA planners attempt to utilise liaison officers (LNOs) as much as possible. Having a dedicated LNO at either the higher or the subordinate HQ increases the possibility of communications dramatically. Even if the LNO is only in place for critical planning events, the dedication of such an officer is most likely worth the effort.

4.10 **Military public affairs planning considerations.** Regardless of the specific situation, the following key questions guide all Mil PA planning:

- How can information activities conducted by Mil PA support the commander's intent?
- What is the relevant StratCom direction and guidance to be applied by Mil PA?
- What are the operating and information environments into which Mil PA is communicating?
- Who is the audience?
- What effect is Mil PA trying to create?
- What is the Mil PA message?
- Why is Mil PA communicating the message?
- How is Mil PA going to communicate?
- What media activities (including digital) will be used in communication?
- What visuals (still and video) are required to communicate the message?
- What outreach activities and community relations can amplify the message?
- When is Mil PA going to communicate?
- How does Mil PA measure its performance or effectiveness?
- What security, privacy or other limiting factors are there?

4.11 Other planning considerations include:

- Who is the release authority?
- What are the critical points that show public opinion or the media environment (ME) is changing?
- Are there changes in trends that could dictate changes to plans? Mil PA can develop a 'Public Affairs Collection Plan' by thorough research and analysis to support the IEA in identifying shifts in trends in the IE.

- What assets are required? These could include a dedicated CCT, transportation, exception to policy for media representatives to fly on military aircraft or download and transmit images on military computer systems.
- Does Mil PA have an updated distribution list/plan that includes email addresses and/or web and social media platforms?
- Development of a visual imagery dissemination plan: how will Mil PA get images to the media and general public? Is there an updated distribution list/plan (email and/or social media posting)?
- What are the potential issues and who are the trusted SMEs to speak to these issues? Are they willing, prepared and available to speak at the decisive points?
- What are the national restrictions on the release of information or visuals?

4.12 Conducting a thorough mission analysis and PA staff estimate enables Mil PA to answer accurately these questions.

4.13 **Military public affairs staff estimate.** The starting point for Mil PA contributions to staff planning is the Mil PA running estimate. This consolidates information on the mission audiences, media presence and capabilities, public opinion, Mil PA assets and PAG. It also looks at emerging trends in media coverage: this covers everything from current events to internal and external communications issues. It requires Mil PA staff to conduct an analysis of the ME and the human environment, including human factors that affect or are affected by the mission, and to use IEA products when available. On the basis of those observations, Mil PA leaders make recommendations on how to best employ Mil PA assets.

a. The staff estimate is not a static document created just for the beginning of an operation. It is a living document intended to maintain a record of the current operating environment in a theatre of operations or mission. It is continually reviewed to reflect changes in situational awareness.

b. The information contained in the estimate feeds into the operations orders or plans and subsequent revisions of those products, if kept current and accurate. Sources of information are not restricted to NATO documents. Any legitimate resource may feed into this estimate.

c. The format and headings are tailored to the specific operations. For example, stand-alone documents and reports may fit the bill for the information required in the estimate and therefore might be included and tabbed within a PA staff estimate binder. These might comprise TPs, themes, command messages, and PAG with proposed questions and answers for engaging the media and what effect this event is trying to create.

d. An example PA staff estimate is provided in Annex B. However, any other format could be valid as long as the estimate provides the data and information to make educated decisions within the planning cycle.



**Military public affairs plans<sup>37</sup>**

4.14 For every NATO operation, mission, activity, exercise and training, Mil PA develops PA plans that, to be effective, are nested with the commander's intent as well as with the higher and subordinate HQs.

4.15 Mil PA aims at achieving integration into a command's planning process, and therefore it maintains a presence in the various planning cells and working groups – such as the IEA, Joint Operations Planning Group, decision-making process battle rhythm groups and boards – within the HQ to ensure Mil PA is integrated into all future operations, missions, exercises and training.

4.16 The Mil PA plan supports the overall HQ mission objectives, SCF and SIG. If appropriate, it is forwarded to the higher HQ for approval. Subordinate level Mil PA plans are reviewed by HQ Mil PA accordingly.

4.17 Mil PA plans (PAG, Mil PA appendix) include direction and guidance for subordinate command Mil PA staff and/or Mil PA FEs. Mil PA plans are intended to inform subordinate command Mil PA of the key tasks, intent and timings early enough to begin parallel planning or to initiate the required actions. This information can be put out as paragraphs within the larger base order or as an appendix.

4.18 The Mil PA plan details the objectives of Mil PA activity, the intent of the programmed activities, the Mil PA approach to be taken, and the tools and resources needed to communicate. For different needs and/or phases of operation the Mil PA plan can take the form of and be distributed as PAG annexed to SIG or an ICP, as Mil PA Appendix 3 to Annex SS to concept of operations (CONOPS)/OPLAN/operation order (OPORD) or each of the above as a stand-alone document for functional direction and guidance.

4.19 The Mil PA plan template can be found in Annex A. This template serves as a checklist to ensure the Mil PA planner has considered the important aspects and issues for information activities conducted by Mil PA.

4.20 The Mil PA plan explains and conveys to subordinate HQs the commander's vision of how information activities will be conducted by Mil PA. It is therefore concise, relevant and directive in nature while providing flexibility to subordinate commands to effectively adapt to evolving situations in accordance with the Mil PA campaigning mindset.

4.21 Additionally, the Mil PA plan is not a solitary document. It cannot be developed in isolation from the HQ base planning documents (e.g., SIG, ICP developed in J-10 StratCom, CONOPS/OPLAN/OPORD developed by the joint staff). Its major points are included within the base document while also incorporating the major points of the base document into it.

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<sup>37</sup> Military public affairs integration into the operations planning process is directed by the chief public affairs officer and facilitated by the information staff function. For more details on information activities integration into headquarters planning, refer to AJP-10.1, *Allied Joint Doctrine for Information Operations*.

**4.22 Generic planning model for military public affairs.** The Mil PA contribution in different phases of the operations planning process is described in general below and illustrated in Figure 4.1.

1. Receipt of the higher commander's planning directive with the mission. The mission might be directed by a commander or it might be an acknowledged need for future action.
  - a. Warning Order #1 (commander alerts subordinate HQ of impending mission and alerts them to begin collaborative/parallel planning).
2. Research and mission analysis.
  - a. Tasks and considerations within the planning step:
    - i. Update Mil PA staff estimate.
    - ii. Analyse higher mission/intent.
    - iii. Identify specified/implied tasks/essential tasks.
    - iv. Review task organisation/assets.
    - v. Determine restrictions/constraints.
    - vi. Assess risk.
    - vii. Identify critical facts/assumptions.
  - b. Product or outputs:
    - i. Develop intent for Mil PA.
    - ii. Warning Order #2 (initiate movement to pre-position resources and personnel, guarantee logistics, establish timings).
3. Course of action (COA) development. Tasks and considerations within the planning step:
  - a. Generate options.
  - b. Develop embedded media, media engagement or visual information plans.
  - c. Identify resource requirements.
  - d. Assign responsibilities.
  - e. Prepare COAs.
4. COA comparison/wargaming. Tasks and considerations within the planning step:
  - a. Identify resource shortcomings, risks and opportunities to create effects.
  - b. Compare COAs against intent and resources available.
5. Appropriate COA selection. Product or outputs: planning directive to subordinate HQ (to trigger COA development at its level; this includes the refined COA, commander's intent, final operational design and subordinate HQ missions).
6. CONOPS development (with Mil PA contribution and collaboration from subordinate HQ).
7. CONOPS approval by higher authority.
8. Plan development (with Mil PA contribution and collaboration from subordinate HQ).
9. Plan approval by higher authority.
  - a. Tasks and considerations within the planning step – the approval authority accepts the plan and authorises resources.
  - b. Product or outputs – Warning Order #3 or Mil PA annex/Mil PA paragraph in the plan.
10. Plan implementation (execution).

11. Operations assessment: evaluate – to take a self-critical look at how the plan was executed and to determine what worked and what did not. This feeds into the research for the next event, or can lead Mil PA to make a course correction in the current activity, if required. Specified lessons learned procedures can support future planning.
12. Transition (new CONOPS and OPLAN for transition).

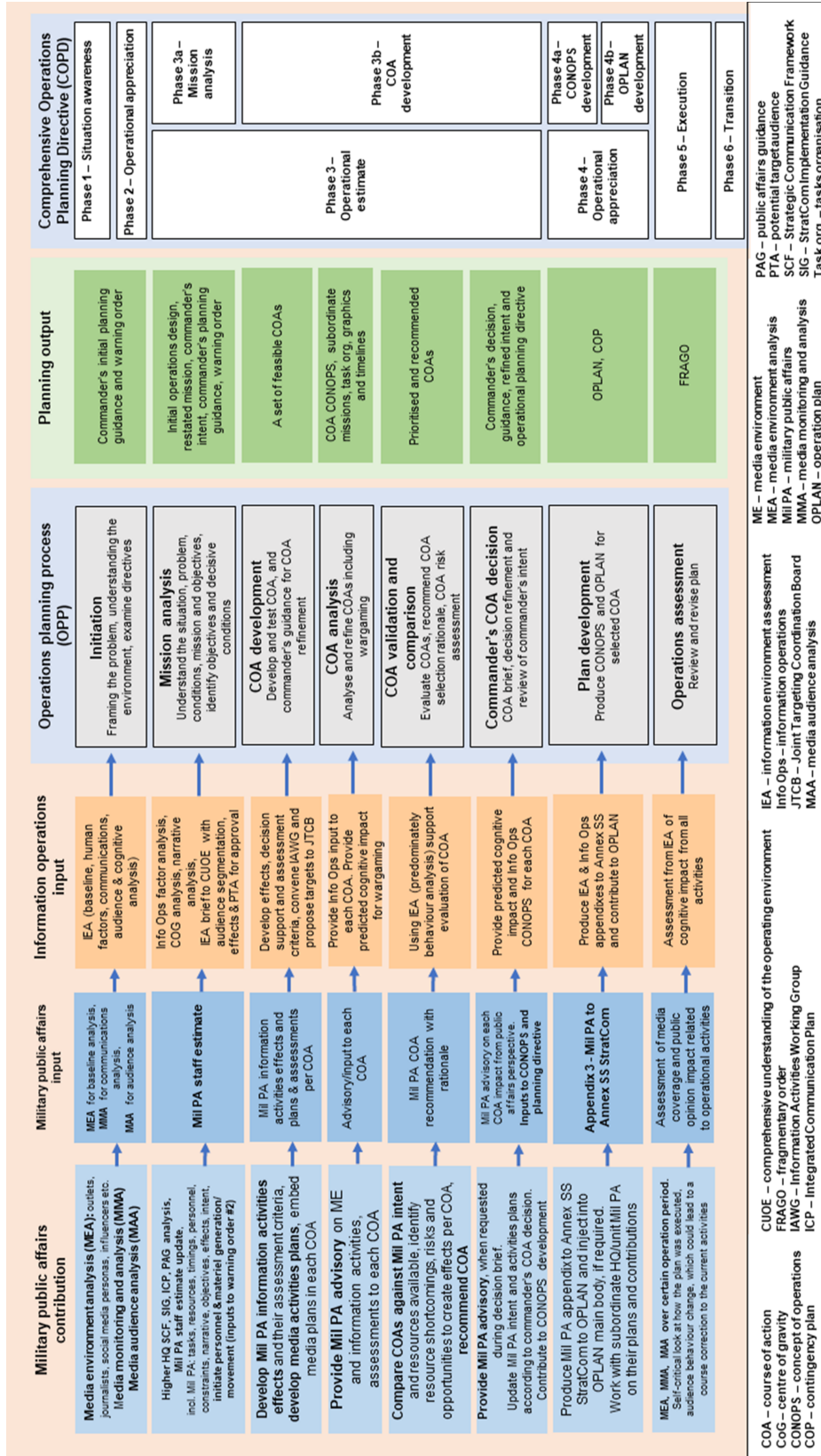


Figure 4.1 – Generic military public affairs planning model and contribution to the operations planning process

## Section 2 – Contribution of military public affairs capabilities in the execution phase

### Military public affairs in the headquarters battle rhythm

4.23 Effective operations require the synchronisation of strategic, operational and tactical processes to ensure mission planning, preparation and execution. This process, called the battle rhythm, is a routine cycle of command and staff activities intended to synchronise current and future operations in accordance with the joint task force (JTF) HQ decision cycle.<sup>38</sup>

4.24 The CPAO and Mil PA plans staff contribute their subject matter expertise in different working groups and boards that are part of the routine cycle within the battle rhythm. They also make sure that the battle rhythm contains meetings to support their information activities. Battle rhythm events in peacetime or baseline activities and current operations differ from those in training, crisis or conflict.

### Working groups and boards that require chief public affairs officer or military public affairs plans staff officer participation

4.25 While in most HQs the chief of staff is responsible for setting up and maintaining the battle rhythm, it is expected that the following meetings are part of a routine cycle of the commander and their staff.

- a. **Joint Coordination Board.** The Joint Coordination Board (JCB) is the commander's principal meeting. Its aim is to assist the macro aspects of joint force command/JTF activity and effects synchronisation, and it is specifically used to issue the commander's priority guidance across components and to resolve potential areas of conflict. As part of the minimum composition of this board, it is attended by both the director of communications (DirCom or similar title), as StratCom advisor, and the CPAO, as PA advisor.
- b. **Joint Coordination Board Working Group.** This working group agrees upon options to be presented to the commander at the JCB. It is attended by the CPAO, who has an active role in ensuring that options being discussed take into account PA aspects, and who provides inputs or recommendations on whether actions should be taken forward or suspended.
- c. **Strategic Communications Coordination Board.** The Strategic Communications Coordination Board (SCCB) is attended by the CPAO. It provides StratCom direction and guidance to HQ and directs the cognitive line of effort to support the strategic and or operational objectives. The SCCB prepares and approves the submissions to the Joint Targeting Coordination Board, the Assessment Board and the

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<sup>38</sup> For more information on battle rhythm, boards and working groups, see AJP-3, *Allied Joint Doctrine for the Conduct of Operations*.

JCB. It normally meets weekly during operations and when required during peacetime to prepare information for the JCB.

d. **(Joint) Assessment Board.** This board provides the commander with feedback on the campaign's progress. The CPAO attends the board and, if necessary, provides advice on effects in the IE, including in the ME, and on other Mil PA information activity audiences.

e. **Joint Targeting Coordination Board.**<sup>39</sup> The Joint Targeting Coordination Board is a functional board that synchronises joint targeting activities to provide the optimum approach for creating the desired effects in support of operational objectives. As a range of capabilities and activities, both physical and informational, can affect the IE, all targeting activities must be coherent with the NATO SCF and mission narrative. Target sets are approved by the North Atlantic Council (NAC) during the planning process. A full spectrum approach to joint targeting ensures inclusion of StratCom, Mil PA and the integrating information staff function where appropriate and permitted<sup>40</sup> to ensure that operational and tactical level activities are in consonance with strategic-level StratCom efforts.<sup>41</sup> The joint targeting cycle is normally managed by a targeting staff that includes, at a minimum, representatives from intelligence and operations staff elements and a legal advisor, with Mil PA included as required for awareness and its advisory role. Mil PA, continuously conducting its information activities across the continuum of competition, does not need special NAC approval for its audiences nor for effects it creates. The CPAO or Mil PA plans staff officer participating in the joint targeting cycle issues advice and guidance on the media and public perception implications of all targeting activities.

### **Working groups and boards led by the strategic communications staff element**

4.26 The following StratCom-related meetings need to take place as part of the regular battle rhythm:

a. **Information Activities Working Group.** The Information Activities Working Group (IAWG) is a DirCom (or similar title) led working group with other staff directorates and subordinate HQ. It coordinates and synchronises horizontally (within HQ) all StratCom planning activities. In line with direction and guidance from the SCCB, it ensures that information activities are coherent and synchronised with the cognitive line of effort and other activities in the engagement space. The Mil PA plans staff officer participates and contributes PA planned activities to the integrated communications of the military HQ. The IAWG liaises with all staff directorates, principal advisors and subordinate commands, as well as coordinating with non-military organisations. Mil PA

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<sup>39</sup> See AJP-3.9, *Allied Joint Doctrine for Joint Targeting*, for further details.

<sup>40</sup> NATO policy and national laws of some NATO member states may not permit the inclusion of such capabilities within the joint targeting cycle.

<sup>41</sup> See AJP-10, *Allied Joint Doctrine for Strategic Communications*, for further details

representatives from subordinate units also participate. The IAWG normally meets daily during operations and when required during peacetime. It prepares and feeds into the Information Activities Coordination Board (IACB), if held, or more likely into the SCCB.

b. **Communications and Engagement Working Group.** The Communications and Engagement Working Group (CEWG) is a working group within an HQ. It coordinates and synchronises all information activities, and engagements that use communication capabilities, and feeds into the SCCB. It normally meets daily during operations and when required during peacetime to prepare information for the SCCB. The Mil PA plans staff officer participates and delivers/takes updates on ongoing or possible (opportunities for) PA media and digital media activities and on direct engagements (outreach, community relations). The deliverable of the CEWG is the StratCom staff element information activities plan, which includes information activities conducted by Mil PA.

c. **Information Activities Coordination Board.** The IACB is attended by the CPAO and is a forum for approving, coordinating, deconflicting and monitoring all IE-related plans and activities for submission to the commander for approval. It ensures that information activities are coherent and synchronised with other activities.<sup>42</sup>

4.27 Depending on the HQ, type of mission or operation, and individual commanders, other working groups and boards where Mil PA subject matter expertise is important can be part of the battle rhythm. On such occasions the CPAO has to assess the input and output of these meetings to understand if the involvement of Mil PA, whether as an advisor or capability contributor, is relevant and required.

### Media integration

4.28 NATO nations encourage media access to Alliance operations and other NATO activities, including hosting accredited media representatives at field HQ or units. Media can be represented by war correspondents accredited to the armed forces, or freelance journalists. All journalists engaged in dangerous professional missions in areas of armed conflict shall be considered as civilians and protected as such (Article 79 Additional Protocol I to the Geneva Conventions, 1977). However, war correspondents accredited to the armed forces are entitled to the status of prisoners of war in case of an International Armed Conflict (Article 4.A.a Geneva Convention III). As Mil PA is a command responsibility, the decision to host media in a military HQ or units on operations is at the discretion of the affected HQ commander, in accordance with direction from theatre and/or the policies established by the ACO. NATO nations that individually establish media embedding programmes are encouraged to ensure that media representatives are offered the opportunity to meet with and be briefed by senior NATO officers or officials prior to being embedded. Ground rules respecting operational security and privacy are operation or activity specific, and are the responsibility of the NMIC.

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<sup>42</sup> Some headquarters have chosen not to convene the Information Activities Coordination Board and to use the Strategic Communications Coordination Board and Information Activities Working Group in its place.

## Establishment and operation of the NATO Media Information Centre

4.29 All NATO-led military operations or other activities involving a major deployment of forces (including major training exercises) establish a facility in theatre, which normally takes the form of an NMIC in a location and facility as accessible to the news media as security conditions allow. Media can be in theatre and cover NATO activities.

4.30 The physical facilities of the NMIC are adequate to accomplish the mission and project a professional image to internal staff and visitors. Daily operations necessitate that the NMIC staff workspace – including equipment areas, meeting rooms and security control points – is separate from any media workspace that may be made available in the NMIC. Unrestricted internet access, to conduct media and social media monitoring and analysis, is required. Security conditions for a particular operation may preclude allowing media into the public affairs officers' workspace, and media may have their own working arrangements, including being accommodated with national contingents, thereby reducing the demand for workspace in the NMIC.

4.31 If feasible, a separate area outside the security zone is made available for news conferences and briefings. This requirement includes adequate internet and lighting, the reduction of excess noise levels, a sound system, simultaneous translation equipment, electrical power access, a splitter box, a stage or raised platform for both the participants and for videographers/photographers, seating arrangements which can accommodate the anticipated number of media and support requirements for interpreters.

4.32 During the first 24 hours after arrival in a new theatre of operation, an NMIC can provide limited media support services. But within this first operational day, the NMIC must:<sup>43</sup>

- a. Establish the 'media centre' (or further develop that of the JMOT) as the focal point for the news media.
- b. Establish communication with higher and subordinate HQs, Supreme Headquarters Allied Powers Europe and NATO HQ, host nation (if applicable) and units operating within the theatre.
- c. In coordination with higher HQs, establish/identify the designated website to post official communications, such as press releases, media advisories or duty phone numbers.
- d. Gain a situational awareness of the media in theatre under Alliance national invitations.
- e. Establish the command structure, lines of authority and release authority within the theatre.
- f. Coordinate with the appropriate authority for leasing and purchasing contracts.
- g. Begin to register news media personnel in the area.
- h. Provide basic media support (coordination of media access to subordinate units and media escort as resources permit).

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<sup>43</sup> When the NATO Media Information Centre is not deployed at the start of an operation/mission or exercise, then the Joint Media Operations Team would provide these services.



- i. Assist or conduct command news briefings and conferences.
- j. Coordinate SME interviews.
- k. Be capable of assisting in the transmission of media products.
- l. Establish which digital platforms (web and social media accounts) to use, post to and monitor.

### **Accreditation and registration of media**

4.33 To manage access to the NMIC facilities, properties and people, the Mil PA staff registers media in close coordination with the host nation and/or the NATO HQ Public Diplomacy Division (PDD), which is responsible for verifying permanently accredited journalists to NATO HQ. Media representatives hosted by NATO sign a waiver of liability exempting the nation and organisation from any claims that might arise as a result of any injuries, harm or damage.

### **Significant incidents**

4.34 Significant incidents including (but not limited to) military and civilian casualties; chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear incidents or attacks; toxic industrial material releases; natural biological outbreaks; accidents; and sexual exploitation and abuse (SEA) of the local population and damage to property or equipment involving NATO forces quickly generate media and public interest, and are publicly acknowledged at the lowest appropriate level in the NATO chain of command. Such announcements are made in close coordination with the nations and organisations involved. NATO nations, as well as organisations working closely with Alliance forces, retain the prerogative to release specific details about incidents involving their personnel, property or equipment, including the names of those killed or injured; the details of damaged property or equipment; and the status of investigations or medical treatment.

- a. Where military casualties are incurred during an ongoing operation, relevant and verified information is disseminated by NATO Mil PA to the media in a timely fashion, while respecting the prerogative of troop-contributing nations (TCNs) to confirm the nationality and nature of casualties and the detailed circumstances of the event. This requires speedy and proactive coordination to ensure message consistency among NATO and national PA communications, especially in the event of multiple investigations.
- b. All information regarding complainants, victims, survivors and alleged perpetrators of SEA are treated with confidentiality. Special attention is provided to the needs of children. NATO Mil PA pursues a trauma-informed, do-no-harm approach when conducting information activities related to SEA.
- c. The NATO CPAO in theatre ensures close coordination with respective senior in-theatre national military representatives. Coordinating with TCN delegations and PA authorities in national capitals is normally led by the Press and Media Section of the PDD at NATO HQ in conjunction with the International Military Staff Public Affairs and Strategic Communications Advisor. Coordinating procedures for announcing NATO

civilian casualties is also led by the Press and Media Section of the International Staff/PDD on behalf of the Secretary General.

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## Annex A – Military public affairs plan template

A.1 Allied Command Operations Comprehensive Operations Planning Directive provides direction on operational staff work. The narrative and the strategic communications (StratCom) concept of operations is provided in the main body of the operation plan (OPLAN), and Annex SS is allocated to allow StratCom direction and guidance to be articulated in detail, including tasks for capabilities. Within Annex SS there are four appendices, which are as follows:

- a. Appendix 1 – Information Environment Assessment. This appendix provides further detail on the audience analysis and deductions from the information environment assessment.
- b. Appendix 2 – Information Operations. This appendix provides specific detail on the integration of information activities, the engagement plan and the assessment plan.
- c. Appendix 3 – Military Public Affairs. This appendix provides the military public affairs (Mil PA) plan using the suggested template provided in paragraph A.6 below.
- d. Appendix 4 – Psychological Operations. This appendix provides the psychological operations (PsyOps) plan.

A.2 The Mil PA staff is responsible for producing the supporting Appendix 3 for Annex SS using the suggested template in this annex.

A.3 **Drafting guidance.** The five main paragraph headings and bold sub-paragraph headings of the Mil PA plan are mandatory. Plain-text sub-paragraph headings may be omitted or supplemented as required. The Mil PA plan accurately describes the environment, states the mission and provides the details for conducting information activities by Mil PA in a manner useful to other Mil PA practitioners. Deviation from this format is authorised but not recommended.

A.4 If appropriate, use an annex to provide the necessary detail required for a particular topic, rather than a paragraph in the base order. Annexes are often useful as stand-alone products or templates for subordinate headquarters (HQ) use. For instance, master messages or service member media cards can be included as appendices to distribute directly to the intended recipient.

A.5 Depending on the resources and staffing available to the particular NATO military HQ drafting the Mil PA appendix, higher HQ assistance or contractor assistance might be sought to provide useful and informed guidance to the subordinate command. Planning is not conducted 'in a vacuum'. Proper planning is coordinated across military and political lines, up and down the chain of command and with the ultimate goal being unity of effort.

**A.6 Military public affairs plan as an appendix template:<sup>44</sup>**

MIL PA APPENDIX 3 TO  
SC ANNEX SS TO  
OPLAN XXX  
DATED ...  
OPLAN XXX  
(TITLE of OPLAN)

**MILITARY PUBLIC AFFAIRS**

REFERENCES:

- A. PO(2009)0141, *NATO Strategic Communications Policy*, 29 September 2009
- B. MC 0628, *NATO Military Policy on Strategic Communications*, 26 July 2017
- C. MC 0457/3, *NATO Military Policy on Public Affairs*, 28 May 2019
- D. AJP-10.3, *RD Military Public Affairs*, 5 July 2023
- E. ACO Directive 095-001, *Public Affairs*, 21 August 2020
- F. ACO Directive 095-002, *Strategic Communications*, 21 May 2012
- G. *ACO/ACT Public Affairs Handbook*, April 2020

Time zone used throughout this order: ZULU.

1. **Situation.** The situation paragraph consists of a brief general description of the communication situation, with emphasis on information particularly affecting the information activities conducted by Mil PA, such as the operating environment's human, information and media environmental baseline study outtakes and outcomes – i.e. friendly to NATO, hostile to NATO.

a. **Enemy forces/opposing or hostile forces.**

- i. Identify the threats to friendly Mil PA efforts or success of the mission.
- ii. Describe the opposing forces' capability/expertise in propaganda or media activities that require specific counteractions.
- iii. Outline any other threats to friendly communications efforts. The scope of this analysis increases from tactical to strategic level.

b. **Friendly forces.**

- i. Outline the higher HQ's Mil PA and adjacent agencies' communications plans.
- ii. Identify any and all other forces or authorities in the joint operations area with Mil PA capacity and/or capabilities and consider the required coordinative activities.

c. **Attachments/detachments.** Highlight critical elements of the task organisation that provide additional public affairs (PA) capacity and/or capability, e.g., subordinate NATO Media Information Centres (NMICs) or detachments of specialist staffs such as NATO television crews or Combat Camera Teams (CCTs).

d. **Availability of local infrastructure to support public affairs activities.** For example, internet infrastructure in place or government/joint/multinational media information centres.

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<sup>44</sup> When drafting the appendix, refer to the main body of the operation plan or Annex SS as much as possible to avoid duplication of content and for the brevity of the appendix.

- e. **Media activity, friendly and hostile.** Identify specific entities and trends, and state how these impact the PA mission in theatre.
- f. **Assumptions.** (If applicable.) Planners must make assumptions when faced with a lack of information or with uncertainties to further the PA plan. Assumptions must be plausible, necessary and realistic, and are eventually confirmed or denied to ensure that the plan remains valid.
- g. **Any other information.** (If relevant to the information environment).

2. **Mil PA mission.** A clear and concise statement of the Mil PA mission, addressing the WHO, WHAT, WHEN, WHERE, WHY and HOW of the Mil PA element. State clearly, in simple terms, how the Mil PA effort supports the commander in achieving their desired objectives. A clear task and purpose are provided and the mission must be nested within both its own HQ and the higher HQ StratCom and Mil PA missions.

### 3. Execution.

- a. **Commander's Mil PA intent.** Clearly and concisely explain the commander's vision of how information activities will be conducted by Mil PA. This paragraph makes clear how much effort will be invested in Mil PA activity.
- b. **Concept of operations.** A detailed discussion of the overall Mil PA mission, explaining how Mil PA will conduct information activities in each phase of the plan and what the priorities, goals and objectives are. All of this should exist as a specific sub-task and purpose for each phase; detail them in an appendix if required.
  - i. Mil PA approach: very active, active or reactive.
  - ii. Mil PA purpose.
  - iii. Mil PA priorities of effort.
  - iv. Desired effects to be created; favourable status of public debate; Mil PA desirable conditions.
- c. **Key tasks.**
  - i. State the overall key tasks that must be accomplished.
  - ii. State tasks and purposes for each subordinate Mil PA entity. Detail requirements for media activities and internal communications, including but not limited to:
    - 1. development of Mil PA plans;
    - 2. capturing, archiving and disseminating imagery (still and video);
    - 3. website and social media presence management;
    - 4. media monitoring;
    - 5. building and maintaining relationships with local/international media, third-party advocates and other stakeholders (e.g., international organisations (IOs), non-governmental organisations (NGOs));
    - 6. creating internal information product for troops in theatre;
    - 7. media training for key leaders or service members.
- d. **Coordinating instructions.**
  - i. Master messages. These can be attached as an appendix.
  - ii. Commander's critical information requirements (CCIRs). Identify types of Mil PA information or events which may have an impact on the conduct of the campaign that the commander should be made aware of. Mil PA recommendations are

integrated into the overall list of CCIRs, which the staff presents to the commander for approval. These are not separate and/or isolated Mil PA CCIRs. Examples might include: inaccurate leader articles in influential media outlets, speeches by senior public figures (ministers and heads of state) of NATO and troop-contributing nations, public statements about the conduct of the mission by senior NATO figures, or combat video that shows enemy or friendly force actions which visually reinforce or conflict with NATO's messages and narratives.

iii. Release authority. State who has the authority to release information and what coordination is required (attach an appendix with a release authority matrix if required).

iv. Synchronisation and timings. Examples include:

1. Provision of details of critical Mil PA timings, synchronisation aspects or key battle rhythm events.
2. Deadlines: indicate any critical deadlines/timings.
3. Briefings: state how frequently these will be conducted and by whom, and any briefing materials that may be required, e.g., digital copies, briefing cards.
4. Routine news conferences/briefings: state how frequently these will be conducted and by whom.

v. Sensitive issues.

1. Casualties/accidents/incidents. Describe the procedure to be used to coordinate the release of information on casualties. Be clear about the delineation of responsibility between national elements and NATO Mil PA staffs. Address incidents involving civilian casualties – both host nation (HN) and international – as well as military casualties from more than one nation in a single incident.
2. HN law. Describe any specific considerations that might apply to journalists or media activities as a result of HN law. If there is a NATO status of forces agreement, state whether its provisions would apply to journalists accompanying NATO military personnel into theatre and include it as a reference to this annex.
3. Cultural/ethnic/religious issues (where applicable).
4. Caveats. Appendix 3 to Annex SS specifically directs that caveats are not released publicly.
5. Limitations on the use of images showing prisoners of war, who are protected against public curiosity (Article 13 Geneva Convention III).

vi. Media facilitation.

1. Media accreditation procedures.
2. Embedded media policies. State whether media will be embedded during the operation and if so how this will be accomplished.

vii. Security: both physical security and operations security (OPSEC). Include at a minimum:

1. Reception, accreditation and identification of media: describe procedures.
2. Reporting restrictions: state any restrictions that may be imposed on the media and why.



3. Security review and instructions on how to clear and declassify documents and information for public release and/or use as Mil PA products.
  - viii. Liaison with others in the information community. Explain how the Mil PA staff conducts normal coordination and deconfliction with StratCom, PsyOps and information operations.
  - ix. Escort officers: what training escort officers receive, who supplies them and who briefs them.
  - x. Specialist support: describe the requirements and arrangements for access to interpreters, translators and cultural advisors.
  - xi. Strategy for coordination with civilian agencies, IOs and NGOs.
4. **Service support.**
- a. **Concept of logistics support for Mil PA.**
  - b. **Transportation.** Consider the following:
    - i. Transport of photographers and videographers.
    - ii. Drivers, communications, integration into higher HQ movement control.
    - iii. Concept to move media through theatre and approval process/authorities.
    - iv. Prioritisation of media on intra- and inter-theatre transportation.
  - c. **Contracting and purchasing.** Consider the following:
    - i. NATO contracting vs national contracting.
    - ii. Process and authority.
    - iii. Local national hiring (media analysts, translators, cultural advisors) and how it can be linked to the commander's objective or desired effects.
    - iv. Command information printing and contracting.
    - v. Photo and video equipment.
    - vi. Laptops and software for imagery editing.
    - vii. Mobile or satellite phones.
    - viii. File sharing, cloud storage and video conferencing software.
    - ix. Office support items.
    - x. Graphical aids, printing, other media.
    - xi. Commercial internet for access to publicly available information.
    - xii. Radio/TV time payments (typically not required, if they are not linked to recruiting efforts).
  - d. **Briefing and press conference support considerations.** Consider the following:
    - i. Conference room.
    - ii. Required hardware such as maps, display boards, large-screen television monitors, overhead projectors, microphones, speakers, splitter boxes.
    - iii. Interpreters, simultaneous translation equipment, transcription services.
    - iv. Food and beverage costs.
  - e. **Other acquisition aspects to consider:**
    - i. Power supplies, voltage, conversion.
    - ii. Stationery.
    - iii. Petty cash.
    - iv. Still and video cameras.
    - v. Printers and photocopiers.
    - vi. Individual digital recorders (one per person in media activities/escort).

vii. Organic transportation (armoured or not) and its inherent requirements such as drivers, security, maintenance.

**5. Command and signal.**

**a. Command.**

i. Mil PA organisation. Can be detailed in an appendix. Include an organisation chart of the relationship between Mil PA and the command group/general staff, joint staff and other communications divisions.

ii. Identify the chain of command and control (C2), locations of the command posts and Mil PA offices, and succession of authority.

iii. Include requirements for Mil PA staff to liaise with their counterparts throughout the chain of command to develop coherent Mil PA advice and recommendations.

**b. Signal.** Issues to consider include:

i. Mil PA point of contact (POC) list, which includes name, rank, unit assigned, title/duty position, phone numbers (secure, non-secure, mobile, satellite) and email addresses, to include group addresses.

ii. Integrated media use of communication assets. If integrated media are anticipated, state clearly whether media may be permitted to file copy using military communications channels.

iii. Computer integration, OPSEC, thumb-drive usage.

iv. Details on the use and acquisition of telephone lines (with international dial-out capability to communicate), mobile or satellite telephones, fax machines, telephone answering machines.

v. Internet connectivity, computers with unrestricted access, mission-secret computers. Include the requirement for access to the Allied Command Operations Open Source System for media monitoring (requires broadband internet connection).

vi. Details for use and acquisition of satellite television with international news channels.

vii. Video transmission systems (might be different systems compatible with NATO requirements).

viii. Commercial/public radio monitoring facilities.

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**Annexes to the Mil PA appendix:**

1. **Background and media environment analysis** (general information about print and broadcast media, telephone system, internet, social media, communication policy).

2. **Mil PA C2 structure** – include as an appendix if not addressed in paragraph 5.

3. **Mil PA approach, goals and objectives, audiences, themes and messages.**

a. Mil PA approach, goals and associated objectives by phase.

b. Key audience analysis.

i. Audience groups may be identified by geography, e.g., citizens of NATO member nations; interest group, e.g., international think tanks/IOs/NGOs; ethnicity; or some other characteristic.

ii. Audience groups must be identified when different communications issues need to be considered.

iii. It is to be remembered that, in the age of the internet and satellite television, messaging leaks across audience boundaries and must be consistent, relevant and appropriate.

c. Mil PA themes and messages, talking points (TPs), holding lines, questions and answers (Q&As). The themes and messages, coordinated within StratCom and the functional line of authority, are enduring but may require different emphasis or even amendment by the mission phase. Messages are related to audiences and often derive from existing higher-level messages or guidance. TPs, holding lines and Q&As dealing with specific issues of the operations are living documents and are updated as the mission develops. The effective management of TPs, holding lines and Q&As is a primary responsibility of the Mil PA effort.

#### **4. Guidelines for release of information, media registration and ground rules, imagery support and casualty reporting.**

a. Media accreditation and ground rules, liability waivers and PA guidelines (includes releasable and non-releasable information, reporting of casualties and any other sensitive issue).

b. Imagery guidelines. At a minimum include:

i. Direction and guidance on the acquisition of images to support the communications plan.

ii. Direction for archiving, metadata and cut lines.

iii. Direction for transmission procedures and distribution lists (e.g., imagery websites).

iv. POCs for assistance.

#### **5. Any other annex as required, e.g.:**

a. Daily and/or weekly reporting format, and any other required template.

b. Service member media cards. Include quick reference cards for NATO service members highlighting the important themes and messages and acceptable guidelines for dealing with the media.

c. Mil PA battle rhythm, taking into consideration higher HQ and NATO HQ battle rhythm.

d. Map of area of responsibility with Mil PA assets, transmission facilities, NMIC, Joint Media Operations Teams, CCTs.

e. Organisation of the NMIC/Mil PA structure.

f. Release authority matrix.

**A.7 Mil PA plan as a separate document.** In some situations an appendix is not appropriate to convey the details of a Mil PA activity. In these instances a more narrative-style Mil PA plan is the alternative. This type of plan is used typically within multi-agency or multinational events rather than the OPLAN or operation order annex or appendix, used when directing a Mil PA plan within a particular command.

**A.8** The format for such a Mil PA plan is flexible. It conveys the major points of the plan in a clear, thorough, yet concise document in which the intended Mil PA operatives and their supported commanders understand the objectives of the plan, key themes, timelines and expectations/responsibilities. A narrative-style Mil PA plan may be used for 'tactical' and local events as well as big-picture 'strategic' events, although the level of detail contained within the plan might vary. Large-event plans are broader in nature, while local-event plans are

much more directive. The situation dictates the level of detail. Regardless, a good narrative-style Mil PA plan covers the following:

- a. A list of applicable references.
- b. A background paragraph (or paragraphs) which informs the reader of the history of the issue, higher-level perspectives, planning assumptions and how the issue/event fits into the bigger picture. Within the paragraph(s) the communications problem is defined.
- c. Intended audiences. An analysis of the various audiences is preferred.
- d. Objectives of the plan. What does the command or multi-agency taskforce intend to accomplish with this plan?
- e. Activities – list specific activities which are to be conducted and describe how each assists in the accomplishment of the goal or objective. Group the activities in support of specific objectives and by phase if there is a roll-out schedule over time.
- f. Other planning considerations – vertical and horizontal.
- g. Explicit statements of the PA approach and a narrative concept statement.
- h. Critical timings and phasing.
- i. Tasks, requests, responsibilities and guidance.
- j. Themes, messages, TPs and/or Q&As (as appropriate).
- k. Measures of activity, performance and effectiveness, if possible.
- l. Any other key information useful to the Mil PA operatives or external agencies implementing the plan or coordinating additional actions.

## Annex B – Military public affairs staff estimate template

**B.1 Mission.** Restate the command's mission from the military public affairs (Mil PA) perspective. This, as analysis of the mission continues, eventually becomes Paragraph 2 of Operation Plan Annex SS, Appendix 3.

**B.2 Situation.** This paragraph describes the operation's strategic and operational media environment and identifies the critical factors that may affect the command's mission.

**B.3 Information environment.** Describe the general characteristics of the operation and the information environment in the area of operations.

a. **Audience analysis.** Understand and segment the audiences in support of the achievement of objectives. Who are the audiences, both internal and external? What are their information needs? How do they get their information: television, radio, newspapers, digital media or word of mouth? Are the media state-run or independent? Who are the media influencers or celebrities? Does the audience population have telephones, mobile/smart phones or internet connectivity? These are common in most countries and are considered during the analysis of information channels.

b. **Media presence.** Assess what media representatives and organisations are in the area of operation. Are they radio, television, online or print? Are they state-run or independent? What is their political slant? Are they receptive to Alliance information products such as news releases or other print or electronic products? Are the media interested in live interviews with Alliance commanders and soldiers?

c. **Media capabilities.** Assess the media's information collection and communication technology, specifically identifying their level of visual information acquisition and satellite communication capabilities. This includes an analysis of the logistics support, transportation assets and host nation communications infrastructure available to them.

d. **Adversaries' capabilities.** Assess the adversary's or adversaries' information strategy, information tactics and communication technology. Specifically identify their level of visual information acquisition, methods and means of disseminating information, and purpose and intent of communications. This includes an analysis of the logistics support, transportation assets and network communications infrastructure available to them. Information operations, legal advisor(s), psychological operations and the intelligence staff element (J2) are consulted as a minimum.

e. **Media content.** Assess the global media's presentation of information, agendas and emerging trends, and analyse and prioritise the potential strategic- and operational-level issues confronting the command in the news media. This media content analysis evaluates the quantity of coverage and the nature of that coverage for credibility, fairness and balance.

f. **Public opinion.** Assess what are the opinions/beliefs of the local populations, of the international community and of the Alliance members' national populations.

g. **Information channel availabilities.** Assess the information channels available for communications in and out of the area of responsibility. Identify the means available to the commander for receipt, transmission and dissemination of voice, data, text, graphics and digital visual imaging. Describe the command, coalition and local national facilities and equipment available, including an analysis of the available telephone lines for voice and data transmission, the accessibility of audio and video channels, the prevalence of private communications devices such as soldier-owned cellular telephones, fax machines, computers, portable radios and televisions, still and video cameras, and the nature and flow of the information possible through these channels.

h. **Information needs.** Assess the information needs of the previously identified key publics. This analyses key internal and external audiences and assesses their news and information expectations. Identify the types of information made available to these key audiences.

i. **Personnel and resources available.** Assess what are the available Mil PA force structure, translators, Combat Camera Teams and/or administrative staff.

j. **Public affairs guidance.** Assess what guidance has been received from higher levels. Official positions on theatre issues are naturally not developed at the tactical level. What is the theatre strategic/national command authority position? This is often coordinated and deconflicted at all levels via conference calls and other communication means.

#### **B.4 Analysis of relative strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, threats of friendly and enemy forces.**

a. **Strengths:** capabilities that enable Mil PA to perform well. A capability is only a strength if it helps Mil PA to meet its task.

b. **Weaknesses:** characteristics that prohibit Mil PA from working well; limitations or deficiencies in resources or capabilities.

c. **Opportunities:** trends, forces, events, ideas to capitalise on.

d. **Threats:** outside events or forces that Mil PA needs to plan for or decide how to mitigate.

#### **B.5 Analysis of courses of action.**

a. Analyse each course of action (COA) according to the Mil PA objectives from higher headquarters or political headquarters.

b. Indicate problems and deficiencies. At a minimum, sub-paragraphs include media facilitation and support, news and information provision, and force training and support.

c. Analyse each COA from a Mil PA point of view to determine its advantages and disadvantages for conducting Mil PA. The detail in which the analysis is made is determined by the level of command, scope of operations and urgency of need.

#### **B.6**

**Comparisons of courses of action.**

- a. Compare the COAs.
- b. List the advantages and disadvantages of each COA under consideration.
- c. Include methods of overcoming deficiencies or modification required for each COA.

**B.7 Conclusions.**

- a. Indicate whether Mil PA can support the command mission (restated in Paragraph B.1 from the Mil PA viewpoint).
- b. Indicate which COAs Mil PA can best support.
- c. List the major Mil PA deficiencies which the commander must consider. Include specific recommendations about methods of eliminating or reducing their effects.

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## Lexicon

### Part 1 – Acronyms and abbreviations

ACO	Allied Command Operations
AGS	Alliance Ground Surveillance
AI	artificial intelligence
AJP	Allied joint publication
ASCP	Allied strategic communications publication
BACO	baseline activities and current operations
C2	command and control
CCIR	commander's critical information requirement
CCT	Combat Camera Team
CEWG	Communication and Engagement Working Group
CIMIC	civil-military cooperation
CIS	communication and information systems
CMI	civil-military interaction
COA	course of action
COM	commander
CONOPS	concept of operations
CPAO	chief public affairs officer
CUOE	comprehensive understanding of the operating environment
DCOM	deputy commander
DirCom	director of communications
FE	force element
GRF	graduated readiness forces
HN	host nation
HQ	headquarters
IACB	Information Activities Coordination Board
IAWG	Information Activities Working Group
ICP	integrated communication plan
IE	information environment
IEA	information environment assessment
IMS PASCAD	International Military Staff Public Affairs and Strategic Communications Advisor
Info Ops	information operations
IO	international organisation
JCB	Joint Coordination Board
JFAC	joint force air component
JFC	joint force command
JLSG	join logistics support group
JMOT	Joint Media Operations Team
JTF	joint task force
LL	lessons learned
LNO	liaison officer

MC	Military Committee
MCR	minimum capability requirements
ME	media environment
Mil PA	military public affairs
NAC	North Atlantic Council
NAEW&C	NATO Airborne Early Warning and Control
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
NCS	NATO Command Structure
NFS	NATO force structure
NGO	non-governmental organisation
NLLP	NATO Lessons Learned Portal
NMIC	NATO Media Information Centre
OE	operating environment
OPLAN	operation plan
OPORD	operation order
OPP	operations planning process
OPSEC	operations security
PA	public affairs
PAG	public affairs guidance
PAO	public affairs officer; public affairs office
PDD	Public Diplomacy Division
PERSEC	personnel security
POC	point of contact
PsyOp	psychological operation
Q&A	questions and answers
RBIO	rules-based international order
SACT	Supreme Allied Command Transformation
SCCB	Strategic Communications Coordination Board
SCF	strategic communications framework
SEA	sexual exploitation and abuse
SG	Secretary General
SHAPE	Supreme Headquarters Allied Powers Europe
SIG	strategic communications implementation guidance
SITREP	situation report
SME	subject matter expert
SSC	single service command
StratCom	strategic communications
STRIKFORNATO	Naval Striking and Support Forces NATO
TCN	troop-contributing nation
TP	talking point
UPAR	unit public affairs representative

## Part 2 – Terms and definitions

### **actor**

An individual, group or entity whose actions are affecting the attainment of the end state.  
(NATO Agreed)

### **artificial intelligence**

The branch of computer science devoted to developing data processing systems that perform functions normally associated with human intelligence, such as reasoning, learning and self-improvement.

(NATO Adopted, record 28750)

### **audience**

An individual, group or entity whose interpretation of events and subsequent behaviour may affect the attainment of the end state.

Note: The audience may consist of publics, stakeholders and actors.

(NATO Agreed)

### **audience analysis**

The understanding and segmentation of audiences in support of the achievement of objectives.

(NATO Agreed)

### **centre of gravity**

The primary source of power that provides an actor its strength, freedom of action and/or will to fight.

(NATO Agreed)

### **chief public affairs officer**

The commander's principal advisor on public affairs matters and spokesperson of a military headquarters or unit, with direct access to the commander.

(This term and definition modifies an existing NATO Agreed term and/or definition and has been processed for NATO Agreed status via terminology tracking file 2008-0403)

**civil-military cooperation**

A military joint function that integrates the understanding of the civil factors of the operating environment and that enables, facilitates and conducts civil-military interaction to support the accomplishment of missions and military strategic objectives in peacetime, crisis and conflict.  
(NATO Agreed)

**civil-military interaction**

Activities between NATO military bodies and non-military actors to foster mutual understanding that enhances effectiveness and efficiency in crisis management and conflict prevention and resolution.  
(NATO Agreed)

**communication crisis**

An event that creates or threatens to create harshly negative media coverage and/or audience activities that could damage in the short term the reputation or future viability of an organisation.  
(This term is a new term and definition and has been processed for NATO Agreed status via terminology tracking file 2023-0075)

**communication issue**

An external or internal factor, usually lasting over the mid to long term, that could represent a serious obstacle to achieving an organisation's objectives and cause damage to its reputation if not managed well.  
(This term is a new term and definition and has been processed for NATO Agreed status via terminology tracking file 2023-0074)

**comprehensive approach**

Combining all available political, military and civilian capabilities, in a concerted effort to attain the desired end state.  
(NATO Agreed)

**course of action**

In the estimate process, an option that will accomplish or contribute to the accomplishment of a mission or task, and from which a detailed plan is developed.  
(NATO Agreed)

**crisis communication**

External and/or internal communication planned and executed by military public affairs to mitigate risks of and/or to respond to a crisis.

(This term is a new term and definition and has been processed for NATO Agreed status via terminology tracking file 2023-0016)

### **cyberspace**

The global domain consisting of all interconnected communication, information technology and other electronic systems, networks and their data, including those which are separated or independent, which process, store or transmit data.

(NATO Agreed)

### **deception**

Deliberate measures to mislead targeted decision-makers into behaving in a manner advantageous to the commander's intent.

(NATO Agreed)

### **disinformation**

False information which is intended to mislead, especially propaganda issued by a government organisation to a rival power or the media.

(COED)

### **effect dimensions**

An analytical construct that translates actions in the engagement space into the physical, virtual and cognitive consequences that these actions may have.

(NATO Agreed)

### **electromagnetic warfare**

Military action that exploits electromagnetic energy to provide situational awareness and create offensive and defensive effects.

(NATO Agreed)

### **end state**

The political-strategic statement of conditions that defines an acceptable concluding situation to be attained at the end of a strategic engagement.

(NATO Agreed)

**engagement space**

The part of the operating environment where actions and activities are planned and conducted.

(NATO Agreed)

**environment**

The surroundings in which an organisation operates, including air, water, land, natural resources, flora, fauna, humans, and their interrelations.

(NATO Agreed)

**influence**

The capacity to have an effect on the character or behaviour of someone or something, or the effect itself.

(COED)

**information**

Data arranged to convey meaning.

(NATO Agreed)

**information activities**

Activities performed by any capability or means, focused on creating cognitive effects.

(NATO Agreed)

**information environment**

An environment comprised of the information itself, the individuals, organisations and systems that receive, process and convey the information, and the cognitive, virtual and physical space in which this occurs.

(NATO Agreed)

**information operations**

A staff function to analyse, plan, assess and integrate information activities to create desired effects on the will, understanding and capability of adversaries, potential adversaries and audiences in support of mission objectives.

(NATO Agreed)

**joint effects function**

A staff function to integrate, coordinate, synchronise and prioritise actions and activities to create effects in the engagement space.  
(NATO Agreed)

**military public affairs capability**

The strategic communications capability responsible for promoting military aims and objectives by communicating accurate and truthful information to internal and external audiences in a timely manner.  
(NATO Agreed)

**narrative**

A spoken or written account of events and information arranged in a logical sequence to influence the behaviour of a target audience.  
(NATO Agreed)

**operating environment**

A composite of the conditions, circumstances and influences that affect the employment of capabilities and bear on the decisions of the commander.  
(NATO Agreed)

**operations security**

All measures taken to give a military operation or exercise appropriate security, using passive or active means, to deny an adversary knowledge of the essential elements of friendly information or indicators thereof.  
(NATO Agreed)

**peace support**

Efforts conducted impartially to restore or maintain peace.  
Note: Peace support efforts can include conflict prevention, peacemaking, peace enforcement, peacekeeping and peacebuilding.  
(NATO Agreed)

**personnel security**

The application of security measures, in order to ensure that all personnel who have access to information have the required need-to-know and have the appropriate security clearance.  
(NATO Adopted)

**propaganda**

Information, especially of a biased or misleading nature, used to promote a political cause or point of view.  
(NATO Agreed)

**psychological operation**

Planned activities using methods of communication and other means directed at approved audiences in order to influence perceptions, attitudes and behaviours, affecting the achievement of political and military objectives.  
(NATO Agreed)

**public**

An individual, group or entity who is aware of activities that may affect the attainment of the end state.  
(NATO Agreed)

**public affairs office**

A staff element of a military headquarters, responsible for public affairs functions, comprising all public affairs officers and the chief public affairs officer.  
(This term and definition modifies an existing NATO Agreed term and/or definition and has been processed for NATO Agreed status via terminology tracking file 2008-0412)

**public affairs officer**

A person trained, qualified and designated to practise military public affairs.  
(This term and definition modifies an existing NATO Agreed term and/or definition and has been processed for NATO Agreed status via terminology tracking file 2008-0411)

**stakeholder**

An individual, group or entity who can affect or is affected by the attainment of the end state.  
(NATO Agreed)



**strategic communications**

In the NATO military context, the integration of communication capabilities and information staff function with other military activities, in order to understand and shape the information environment, in support of NATO strategic aims and objectives.

(NATO Agreed)

**target**

An area, infrastructure, object, audience or organisation against which activities can be directed to create desired effects.

(NATO Agreed)

**target audience analysis**

The focused examination of targeted audiences to create desired effects.

(NATO Agreed)

**understanding**

The interpretation and comprehension of a particular situation in order to provide the context, insight and foresight required for effective decision-making.

(NATO Agreed)



**AJP-10.3(A)(1)**

