

Evolving Joint Public Affairs to Drive Information Advantage in Support of the Joint
Warfighting Concept

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14. ABSTRACT The Joint Warfighting Concept (JWC) outlines a new way of war for the U.S., one focused on all domain operations. Given this new approach, Public Affairs practitioners must adapt how they operate at the Combatant Command (CCMD). This paper provides three areas that contribute to why PA must evolve: the inability to process information, a lack of integration within the CCMD, and prohibitive cultures and structures. The paper draws conclusions concerning how to address these issues that involve increasing understanding of the information environment (IE) and broadening coordination with Information Operations (IO) and planners. Finally, it recommends practical areas for improvement for PA at the CCMD.					
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“Information is such a powerful tool that it is recognized as an instrument of national power. The elevation of Information as a joint function impacts all operations. It signals a fundamental appreciation for the military role of information at the strategic, operational, and tactical levels within today's complex operating environment.”

Secretary of Defense James N. Mattis, 15 September 2017, Information as a Joint Function

Introduction

Seventy-seven years ago, President Harry Truman announced the end of World War II in Europe. The day prior, Germany signed an unconditional surrender, taking effect 8 May 1945. Like many others of his time, Truman dreamt of a future free of conflict. Cities all across Western Europe and the U.S. put out flags and banners, rejoicing in the defeat of the Nazi war machine. Today, that Nazi war machine is alive and well, according to Russian propogandists who have been running a campaign casting Ukrainians as Nazis in the ongoing conflict between the nations. Russia depicts the U.S. and NATO as the “true aggressors” in the conflict, gearing their messaging towards both internal and external audiences. None of this information is hidden – it appears openly on Russian state media and Kremlin-backed online accounts.¹ Russia propels its misinformation campaign by using historical clips and even video gameplay as recent war footage.² Incredibly, Russia’s disinformation campaign has also led some Russians to believe that the conflict does not even exist.

Russia’s actions contribute to why today’s operating environment is arguably the most challenging since World War II. The threat has evolved, as evidenced by Russia’s actions, and has expanded from the physical to the information environment (IE). Russia continues increasing

¹ Brandt, Jessica, and Adrianna Pita. “How Is Russia Conducting Cyber and Information Warfare in Ukraine?” Brookings, 3 Mar. 2022, <https://www.brookings.edu/podcast-episode/how-is-russia-conducting-cyber-and-information-warfare-in-ukraine/>.

² Warzel, Charlie. “The Information War Isn't over Yet.” The Atlantic, Atlantic Media Company, 8 Mar. 2022, <https://www.theatlantic.com/technology/archive/2022/03/russia-ukraine-war-propaganda/626975/>.

its military capabilities. Their assertive actions are designed to exert global influence and challenge the existing international order. They are creatively integrating information operations (IO), foreign influence, cyberspace operations, and irregular warfare into what is known as hybrid warfare. Jarringly, they have employed these methods in Ukraine since 2014 in what they call “reflexive control.”³ But despite the recent focus on Russia’s actions, they are not the only threat.

The U.S. presidential administration has also identified China as the preeminent threat, followed closely by North Korea, Iran, and non-state actors. These nations are improving their military and technological capabilities exceptionally fast. Competition between these powers serves as the foundation of the U.S. National Defense Strategy, but is not limited to the physical environment.⁴ U.S. adversaries are moving unbelievably fast in the IE as well. The U.S. military, combatant commanders (CCDRs) and public affairs (PA) operators, must move now, at speed, to manage and counter these threats. Given this peer-competitor threat picture, what should future capabilities look like?

Addressing that question and recognizing the growing importance of information in warfighting operations, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff added information as a new joint warfighting function in 2018. That same year the Joint Concept for Operating in the

³ “Reflexive control is a “uniquely Russian” concept based on maskirovka, an old Soviet notion in which one “conveys to an opponent specifically prepared information to incline him/her to voluntarily make the predetermined decision desired by the initiator of the action”. In other words, it is a sustained campaign that feeds an opponent select information so that the opponent makes the decisions that one wants him/her to. Methods of reflexive control include spreading false information, leaking partial information at opportune moments, and projecting a different posture of oneself than what may actually be the case.”; Snegovaya, Maria. “Russian Report 1 Putin’s Information Warfare in Ukraine.” Institute for the Study of War, Sept. 2015, [https://understandingwar.org/sites/default/files/Russian%20Report%201%20Putin's%20Information%20Warfare%20in%20Ukraine-%20Soviet%20Origins%20of%](https://understandingwar.org/sites/default/files/Russian%20Report%201%20Putin's%20Information%20Warfare%20in%20Ukraine-%20Soviet%20Origins%20of%20)

⁴ The great powers often refer to the U.S., China and Russia. As the Wilson Center identifies, these powers compete to shape security architectures, global norms and practices, trade and investment regimes, and development and regulation of technological infrastructures; “Great Power Competition.” Wilson Center, <https://www.wilsoncenter.org/issue/great-power-competition>.

Information Environment (JCOIE) was published. The JCOIE realizes that information has changed modern warfare and adversaries can use information to gain an operational or strategic advantage. As the JCOIE seeks to institutionalize the Joint Force's approach to information, so must the PA career field.⁵

In 2020, the Joint Staff began development of the Joint Warfighting Concept (JWC), a classified document. The JWC defines future warfighting concepts for 2030 and beyond and calls for expanded maneuver in space and time. It outlines and defines requirements for four strategic directives, or pillars: Joint All-Domain Command and Control (JADC2), joint fires, contested logistics and information advantage (IA). These efforts are focused on gaining an advantage over the aforementioned threats. Specifically, achieving an IA will require transformative thinking, new capabilities and doctrinal updates that will enable expanded maneuver in both space and time. Further, IA, as presented in the JWC, will drive modified PA practices, investments in people and training, and greater integration of IO and global fires. CCDRs would be smart to embrace this early. As such, the current threat environment and the addition of information as a new joint warfighting function demand that PA must improve overall functionality and integration within the CCMD structure to better enable IA in support of the JWC.⁶

⁵ *Joint Concept for Operating in the Information Environment (JCOIE)*. 2018.
https://www.jcs.mil/Portals/36/Documents/Doctrine/concepts/joint_concepts_jcoie.pdf.

⁶ Functionality means the ability to operate in a particular manner. Integration means participation within the structure.

Information Overload

PA operators do not have the tools to understand their role in the IE relative to their CCMD and face information overload. Furthermore, PAs are not adept at handling and processing greater amounts of information that would allow them to drive IA in support of the JWC. The Public Affairs Officer (PAO) serves as the commander's principal spokesperson, providing counsel to leaders and guiding communications activities. They operate within the IE, which is comprised of three dimensions – cognitive, informational and physical – and focuses on the relationships between transmission, processing and storage within those dimensions.⁷ Having an IA means “gaining a temporary and contested edge in using information through technical systems, cognitive processes, and perceptual/psychological influence to achieve tactical, operational, or strategic advantages against a competitor in peacetime or an adversary in war.”⁸ Milan Vego, Professor of Operations at the Naval War College, argues that information is not tangible, and contributes to a commander's decision making process. This includes all information, be it intelligence, that which exists in cyberspace, or publicly available information. If not managed, this proliferation of information can lead to poor integration into a decision making process.⁹ However, more information does not necessarily equate to better decision making, nor does it mean automatic achievement of an IA – CCDRs must translate information into decision advantage. When

*“If everything is amplified, we
hear nothing.”
~ Jon Stewart*

⁷ *Joint Concept for Operating in the Information Environment (JCOIE)*. 2018.

https://www.jcs.mil/Portals/36/Documents/Doctrine/concepts/joint_concepts_jcoie.pdf.

⁸ Dougherty, Chris. “Confronting Chaos: A New Concept for Information Advantage.” *War on the Rocks*, 8 Sept. 2021, <https://warontherocks.com/2021/09/confronting-chaos-a-new-concept-for-information-advantage/>.

⁹ Vego, Milan. “Maritime Strategy and Sea Control.” 2016. Pg. 63

engaged in conflict, and even when not, control of a battlespace must begin with “all-out efforts to obtain or deny information superiority.”¹⁰ This is the aim of IA as outlined in the JWC.

Information technologies have increased the amount of information available. With more than four billion broad-band users in the world, people now have access to create and share information as never before.¹¹ Thomas T. Hills, a psychologist at the University of Warwick, UK, outlines the negative impacts of living in an information prolific world, one of which is the inability to mentally process greater amounts of information. He also highlights the proliferation of misinformation as a problem, evidenced by Russia’s activities in Ukraine. Psychologically, information proliferation means there is increasing “competition for attention” or greater amounts of background noise.¹² Further, this information availability is a dual-edged sword – what is available to the U.S. military is also available to its adversaries.¹³ While information also exists in classified realms, adversaries are gaining new technologies that make it increasingly difficult to protect information. Finally, information availability brings inherent challenges like combating misinformation or an inability to shape public narrative, which can impact the military’s ability to execute operations. For the PAO who operates in this ubiquitous information environment, this requires a keen understanding of the forces at play, as well as an ability to process and handle vast amounts of information.

So how do PAOs handle information and what are the current practices? The Office of the Secretary of Defense publishes a daily roll-up of about thirty of the latest news articles

¹⁰ Vego, Milan. “Maritime Strategy and Sea Control.” 2016. Pg. 68

¹¹ Hills, Thomas Trenholm. “The Dark Side of Information Proliferation.” *WRAP*, Sage Publications Inc., 1 May 2019, <https://wrap.warwick.ac.uk/107624/>.

¹² Hills, Thomas Trenholm. “The Dark Side of Information Proliferation.” *WRAP*, Sage Publications Inc., 1 May 2019, <https://wrap.warwick.ac.uk/107624/>.

¹³ Lopez, C. Todd. “Technology Proliferation, Influence Ops May Be as Disruptive as Covid-19.” *U.S. Department of Defense*, <https://www.defense.gov/News/News-Stories/Article/Article/2350369/technology-proliferation-influence-ops-may-be-as-disruptive-as-covid-19/>.

pertaining to the DoD. Separately, each Service provides a similar product, with about 30 articles as well. Assuming it takes about two minutes to read a page, that would equate to two hours of reading the morning news every day, and all before the first meeting with the commander. This does not even account for national news or another similar product available to CCMD PAOs, all of which contributes to information overload.

What does this mean for PA practitioners? In 2011, Nielsen-Green wrote that U.S. Army PAOs are not adequately trained for success in the modern IE.¹⁴ Why? One reason: information overload. The tools available to handle and process greater amounts of information have changed little since the advent of the internet and the increase of information to enable faster processing of information. Although machine learning enables users to sort through data quicker, no application has thus been developed to specifically aid a PA.

Another hindrance is outdated PA doctrine. The most recent version of joint PA doctrine is from 2016, meaning that the newest warfighting function, information, has yet to be incorporated within. Updating doctrine would enable PAOs to better understand their role in achieving IA. This includes improving understanding of information and the informational aspects of military activities, informational power, and how to institutionalize and operationalize the integration of physical and informational power, as outlined in the JCOIE.

By conveying the facts about joint force activities in a proactive manner, PA helps the CCDR impact the IE, especially when it comes to public support¹⁵. However, an unprepared or unknowledgeable PAO will be an ineffective conduit between the CCDR and the public. If they

¹⁴ Spears, Charles. "Evaluating the Professional Status of the U.S. Army's Public Affairs Program." June 2019. *U.S. Army Command and Staff College*. <https://apps.dtic.mil/sti/pdfs/AD1110163.pdf>.

¹⁵ Spears, Charles. "Evaluating the Professional Status of the U.S. Army's Public Affairs Program." June 2019. *U.S. Army Command and Staff College*. <https://apps.dtic.mil/sti/pdfs/AD1110163.pdf>.

do not understand the IE or cannot manage it, CCDRs cannot expect to gain an IA over an adversary.

Integration Challenges

“Nothing can now be believed which is seen in a newspaper. Truth itself becomes suspicious by being put into that polluted vehicle.”
~ Thomas Jefferson

PAOs lack integration across CCMD joint staffs, specifically with IO and planners, to drive IA to advance the JWC. Integration is critical because the basis of all operations is information. The availability, speed, and changing character of information allows state and non-state actors to “influence global audiences, rapidly gain momentum, and advance their objectives.”¹⁶ In the information age data and information are now among the world’s most valuable resources.¹⁷ The role of information in warfare is not new. Changes in technology and its integration into “weapons, concepts, and organization” point to the changing character of information “relative to more-conventional measures of military strength.” Information now moves at greater speed and more deeply penetrates society.¹⁸ This interconnected world is based on moving information to decision makers. It also means achieving IA is more important than ever before.

Both state and non-state actors are talented at using information that provides an edge over the U.S. military.¹⁹ Additionally, U.S. adversaries do not follow the same ethics rules, thus presenting a challenge for American practitioners because of possible perceptions created if

¹⁶ *Joint Concept for Operating in the Information Environment (JCOIE)*. 2018.

https://www.jcs.mil/Portals/36/Documents/Doctrine/concepts/joint_concepts_jcoie.pdf.

¹⁷ Crowell, Richard. Great Power Competition – China’s Use of Small War and Information Power in Pursuit of Its epochal World Order.” July 2021.

¹⁸ Khalilzad, Zalmay. “Strategic Appraisal: The Changing Role of Information in Warfare.” 1999. *Rand Project Air Force*.

¹⁹ *Joint Concept for Operating in the Information Environment (JCOIE)*. 2018.

https://www.jcs.mil/Portals/36/Documents/Doctrine/concepts/joint_concepts_jcoie.pdf.

PAOs work with IO. The U.S. has a policy of separation between PA and influence operations (one component of IO) to foster public trust and legitimacy of its military institution.²⁰

Adversaries do not. In practice, what does this look like for, say, China? The People’s Liberation Army (PLA) public opinion (media) warfare efforts work to influence both domestic and international public opinion to strengthen support for their own military operations.²¹ The Chinese concept of “Three Warfares” explicitly blurs the lines between public opinion warfare, psychological warfare, and legal warfare.²² Likewise, Russia integrates cyber and IO into both military and non-military activities, during conflict and peacetime. They seek to erode “cohesion in target societies and [undermine] rival states’ leadership,” as seen most recently in Ukraine.²³ Not only do the efforts of U.S. adversaries negatively impact IA, they also degrade public trust in the U.S. military – only 56 percent of people surveyed trust the military (previously 70 percent) – and that distrust is easy for adversaries to exploit and hinders achievement of IA.²⁴

To illustrate the disconnect between PA and IO, during the conflict in Afghanistan, in 2012, Rand published a study that recognized the need for greater integration between IO and PA.²⁵ In 2019, the Government Accountability Office (GAO) also found that DoD Information

²⁰ By law, PA is prohibited from intentionally deceiving the public. PA, PSYOPS, and MISO activities are “separate and distinct, but they must support and reinforce each other, which requires coordination, synchronization, and occasionally deconfliction. JFCs must ensure that appropriate coordination between MISO and PA activities are consistent with the DOD Principles of Information, policy or statutory limitation, and security.” *JP 3-13.2, Military Information Support Operations*. <https://www.bits.de/NRANEU/others/jp-doctrine/JP3-13.2C1%2811%29.pdf>.

²¹ Wortzel, Larry. *The Chinese People's Liberation Army and Information Warfare*. <https://publications.armywarcollege.edu/pubs/2263.pdf>.

²² Three Warfares is a Chinese concept that focuses on emphasizing and integrating public opinion warfare, psychological warfare, and legal warfare. Littell, Joe, and Maggie Smith. “Rethinking ‘Man, Train, and Equip’ for Information Advantage.” *Modern War Institute*, 25 Jan. 2022, <https://mwi.usma.edu/rethinking-man-train-and-equip-for-information-advantage/>.

²³ Littell, Joe, and Maggie Smith. “Rethinking ‘Man, Train, and Equip’ for Information Advantage.” *Modern War Institute*, 25 Jan. 2022, <https://mwi.usma.edu/rethinking-man-train-and-equip-for-information-advantage/>.

²⁴ Littell, Joe, and Maggie Smith. “Rethinking ‘Man, Train, and Equip’ for Information Advantage.” *Modern War Institute*, 25 Jan. 2022, <https://mwi.usma.edu/rethinking-man-train-and-equip-for-information-advantage/>.

²⁵ Munoz, Arturo. *U.S. Military Information Operations in Afghanistan Effectiveness of Psychological Operations 2001–2010*. 2012, https://www.rand.org/content/dam/rand/pubs/monographs/2012/RAND_MG1060.pdf.

Operations needed enhanced integration with PA.²⁶ By creating a stronger PA and IO relationship, CCDRs can “blunt, and counter adversary use of ideas, images, and violence designed to manipulate the U.S., its allies, and its partners.”²⁷ By improving internal communication, understanding and coordination without blurring lines, PA and IO can each facilitate accomplishment of the same operational objectives using different means. While U.S. PAOs are prohibited from bending the rules like their adversaries, PA staff coordination not only improves mission effectiveness, but enhances cultural respect throughout the organization as well.²⁸ A compelling public narrative can be reinforced and deconflicted with IO efforts, as long as care is taken to follow legal and policy constraints. Former Secretary of Defense Mark Esper said that PAOs “must be synchronized with the staff, developing communication plans that are operationally relevant and aligned with commanders’ objectives.”²⁹ This means that PAOs must proactively engage operational planners to support the JWC’s IA pillar. These efforts will give the U.S. an edge over adversaries in the IE.

In a similar vein, research conducted by the Army War College reveals a weak PA and J5 planner relationship, in which PAOs are not formally integrated enough into operational planning³⁰. Alternatively, units that do have some form of integration further show second-order effects of “inhibiting the PAO’s ability to keep up with events in the IE and diminishing the experiential voice of the PAO as a command counselor because of the remaining cultural

²⁶ “Information Environment: DOD Operations Need Enhanced Leadership and Integration of Capabilities.” *U.S. Government Accountability Office*, 30 Apr. 2021, <https://www.gao.gov/assets/gao-21-525t.pdf>.

²⁷ *Joint Concept for Operating in the Information Environment (JCOIE)*. 2018. https://www.jcs.mil/Portals/36/Documents/Doctrine/concepts/joint_concepts_jcoie.pdf.

²⁸ Spears, Charles. “Evaluating the Professional Status of the U.S. Army’s Public Affairs Program.” June 2019. *U.S. Army Command and Staff College*. <https://apps.dtic.mil/sti/pdfs/AD1110163.pdf>.

²⁹ Spears, Charles. “Evaluating the Professional Status of the U.S. Army’s Public Affairs Program.” June 2019. *U.S. Army Command and Staff College*. <https://apps.dtic.mil/sti/pdfs/AD1110163.pdf>.

³⁰ The J5 is responsible for plans, strategy and policy recommendations. Spears, Charles. *Evaluating the Professional Status of the U.S. Army’s Public Affairs Program*. <https://apps.dtic.mil/sti/pdfs/AD1110163.pdf>.

emphasis on PA as a nonlethal fire.”³¹ Whether engaged in conflict or in operations short of war, IA holds power. To illustrate that point, Vego emphasizes the importance of public opinion in operations short of war, even asserting that the role of media and public opinion play a greater role in operations short of war. Even minor mistakes made by the military and its leaders have the potential to make the news, for which there is little forgiveness from the public and politicians. The overall point is that military operations, even the smallest ones, must be planned with public sentiment in mind, and that means, to achieve IA, PA must improve integration with planners and IO.³²

Culture Shift

Structure, culture and institutional ways of thinking are insufficient to leverage the organic expertise of PA operators at the CCMD who seek to

If you always do what you always did, you will always get what you always got.
~ Albert Einstein

achieve IA in support of the JWC. In 2021, while exercising concepts outlined in the JWC, leaders realized they could not “take for granted that the U.S. military would retain information dominance.” They were operating under the assumption that information was “ubiquitous to its forces, as it has been for the last 20 years.”³³ This mindset and erosion of information supremacy reveal the need for a paradigm shift. CCDRs, planners and PAOs alike must overcome doctrinal

³¹ Spears, Charles. “Evaluating the Professional Status of the U.S. Army’s Public Affairs Program.” June 2019. *U.S. Army Command and Staff College*. <https://apps.dtic.mil/sti/pdfs/AD1110163.pdf>. “In some units, PAOs are not integrated into planning enough to be effective. In other units, they are so overly integrated into planning that there is not enough time to execute critical public engagement duties.”

³² Vego, Milan. “Operations Short of War and Operational Art.” *National Defense University Press*. 10 September 2020. <https://ndupress.ndu.edu/Media/News/News-Article-View/Article/2339209/operations-short-of-war-and-operational-art/>

³³ Gould, Joe. “Hyten Explains New Acquisition Directives to Industry.” *Defense News*, Defense News, 27 July 2021, <https://www.defensenews.com/pentagon/2021/07/26/hyten-explains-new-acquisition-directives-to-industry/>.

and institutional ways of thinking. Although doctrine prescribes PA roles, PAOs at the CCMD often must work through many layers to obtain even the most basic mission status information.³⁴ For instance, they need the proper security clearance, access to the secure facility, badging, an understanding of who has the information needed, and clearance through section chiefs, deputies and commanders to even view the information. Former Secretary of Defense Mark Esper recognized this cultural dilemma, claiming that “In the past we’ve often times been slow to communicate, vetting everything through multiple layers of bureaucracy for fear of responding without the highest levels of approval. Going forward we must be quicker to communicate, more timelier by powering down authorization to the appropriate level.”³⁵

Allison Teeter-Baker, a researcher from San Jose State University, argues that these rigid approval hierarchies and authoritarian culture slow down response times to media queries and limits PA involvement.³⁶ And while bureaucracy is in place to limit risk, if one views information as a weapon, this presents a liability. The JCOIE openly acknowledges the need for a paradigm shift in the way information is viewed as compared to physical power.³⁷ It identifies multiple “required capabilities to institutionalize the integration of physical and informational power,” one of which is that the Joint Force requires the ability to “change how its individuals, organizations, and units think about and treat information.”³⁸

³⁴ Spears, Charles. “Evaluating the Professional Status of the U.S. Army’s Public Affairs Program.” June 2019. *U.S. Army Command and Staff College*. <https://apps.dtic.mil/sti/pdfs/AD1110163.pdf>.

³⁵ Spears, Charles. “Evaluating the Professional Status of the U.S. Army’s Public Affairs Program.” June 2019. *U.S. Army Command and Staff College*. <https://apps.dtic.mil/sti/pdfs/AD1110163.pdf>.

³⁶ https://scholarworks.sjsu.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=4521&context=etd_theses

³⁷ *Joint Concept for Operating in the Information Environment (JCOIE)*. 2018. https://www.jcs.mil/Portals/36/Documents/Doctrine/concepts/joint_concepts_jcoie.pdf.

³⁸ *Joint Concept for Operating in the Information Environment (JCOIE)*. 2018. https://www.jcs.mil/Portals/36/Documents/Doctrine/concepts/joint_concepts_jcoie.pdf.

These military cultural considerations prevent PA personnel from being fully effective when combating enemy communications or IO because they are often excluded from planning efforts, as previously outlined.³⁹ As retired Marine Gen. Walter Boomer, former Assistant Commandant of the Marine Corps, put it “to exclude the PAO from operational planning because the commander doesn’t like the media is like excluding the medical officer because [the commander] doesn’t like to deal with casualties.”⁴⁰

Why does this exclusion happen? One reason can be found in doctrine. JP 5-0 recommends that PAOs *should* also be included in the planning process based on the mission. It does not dictate that they *must* be included. Initial consultation with a PA at the beginning of mission analysis allows the PA to assist the lead planner in determining whether their further involvement is warranted. This does not happen in practice. PA is critical to helping achieve wartime objectives, yet it is often an afterthought to planners. Including PAOs in the planning process from the beginning will better enable CCDRs to successfully shape operations, understand the OE, and, as retired Rear Admiral John Kirby, Assistant to the Secretary of Defense for Public Affairs, remarked, is “one of the most effective tools for maintaining public support during military operations other than war.”⁴¹

An inadequate structure at CCMD PA offices also contributes to a culture that lacks integration that would drive IA. Often times, manning structures contribute to PAOs who are stretched too thin and unable to participate in the planning process. Not only are they often

³⁹ Spears, Charles. “Evaluating the Professional Status of the U.S. Army’s Public Affairs Program.” June 2019. *U.S. Army Command and Staff College*. <https://apps.dtic.mil/sti/pdfs/AD1110163.pdf>.

⁴⁰ Spears, Charles. “Evaluating the Professional Status of the U.S. Army’s Public Affairs Program.” June 2019. *U.S. Army Command and Staff College*. <https://apps.dtic.mil/sti/pdfs/AD1110163.pdf>.

⁴¹ Spears, Charles. “Evaluating the Professional Status of the U.S. Army’s Public Affairs Program.” June 2019. *U.S. Army Command and Staff College*. <https://apps.dtic.mil/sti/pdfs/AD1110163.pdf>.

excluded from planning, but if asked to participate many times cannot. For example, the Central Command PA office dedicates one person out of ten to coordinate with planners. Similar constructs exist at European and Africa Commands.⁴² Coordinating with IO almost certainly falls by the wayside. Within the Joint Staff PA office this duty falls to the J3 PAO, who is often overcome by current events and lacks the necessary time to truly dedicate to IO coordination efforts.⁴³ For either division, J5 or J39 (IO), there is no clear cross-functional information sharing structure that seeks to eliminate walls between the organizations. PA operators could embrace a streamlined structure to strengthen two separate relationships: 1) the PA and IO (J39) and 2) PA and Planner (J5) relationship. These relationships facilitate cross-talk, early and often. In order for CCDRs to gain and maintain the advantage in the IE they must empower PA with the flexibility to restructure, as necessary. This might mean taking risk in other areas of PA. However, a reorganized and flexible structure will help information flow more freely internally and externally to the organization and drive dominance in the IE.

Another Lens

A skeptic might argue that maintaining PA operations under the current construct would still sufficiently enable IA in support of the JWC. With a declining military end strength – President Biden calls for a decrease from 1,351,000 personnel in 2021 to 1,346,400 in 2022⁴⁴ - there remains little margin to pad PA shops with additional personnel. PA will continue to operate and have success as they have in the past. Additionally, PA operations exist somewhat

⁴² Separately, it's unclear if there is an individual dedicated to coordinate with the J39 section, which is where information operations falls. Information derived from COCOM organizational phone rosters.

⁴³ JS PA dedicates a PAO to functional directorates. For example, a PAO supports the Director, J3 (or J1 or J5, etc.) and serves as liaison between the J3 and the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff PAO.

⁴⁴ Harper, Jon. *U.S. Military 'Staring into Abyss,' Report Says*. National Defense Magazine, 13 Dec. 2021, <https://www.nationaldefensemagazine.org/articles/2021/12/13/us-military-staring-into-abyss-report-says>.

separate from IO for a reason – so that PA offices maintain their credibility with the media and the publics they serve. Changing that relationship would degrade public trust. Existing doctrine and practices are adequately sufficient to address future challenges.

However, the supposition that maintaining PA operations as status quo is not optimal. The U.S. needs to look closely at where its adversaries are going and see clearly where they want to go. They must evolve as the technological opportunities arise and the threat from adversaries changes. This means injecting innovation into its information and PA processes. U.S. adversaries are not seeking a level playing field. In fact, they have already created new rules that the U.S. cannot play by given its ethical restrictions. If the U.S. continues the practices that have been employed for the past twenty-years and simply tries to do them better, they will fail. Structures, mindsets, culture and doctrine must evolve to achieve an IA.

Conclusion

Given the addition of information as a new joint warfighting function, PA must improve functionality and integration within the CCMD to better enable IA in support of the JWC. The U.S. must be prepared to meet peer-competitor threats head-on to gain an IA. Peer competitors, like Russia, show no signs of stopping their weaponization of information. Using information as a weapon will enable success for the CCDR in future conflicts. Properly preparing PAOs will increase understanding of the IE and create conditions for future success in the battlespace. Currently, PAOs lack understanding of their role in the IE and do not have the tools to handle and process greater amounts of information. Additionally, PAOs are not integrated across CCMDs and lack sufficient structure to drive IA to advance the JWC. Finally, doctrine, culture and institutional ways of thinking are insufficient to leverage the organic expertise of PAOs at

the CCMD. PA practitioners bear the burden of truth. In war or conflict, the PAOs must shine a light in a timely manner on what is known to be true and what is known to be false.

Recommendations

The U.S. must state clearly the capabilities it needs with great and consistent vision. Above all, integration must be driven from the top down. Commanders must understand that achieving an IA depends on maximizing PA integration at all levels, not just with the CCDR. The role of PAs must be elevated in a way that enables PAs to become all-around information and strategic advisors. The PA community must breed, build, and cultivate PAOs who are motivated and capable of operating in an evolving and expanding IE. The following recommendations seek to improve PA functionality and integration within the CCMD structure to help practitioners achieve IA in support of the JWC.

- First, employ contractors or other personnel at CCMDs to conduct localized news compilation and messaging analysis. Consider allocating non-PA officers for a career-broadening assignment with PA, especially prospective commanders. Finally, train and empower senior non-commissioned officers (SNCOs) to serve as PA advisors. Employing additional personnel to assist PAOs will weed through the “noise” and help PAOs handle and process critical information in a quicker manner.
- Second, consider creating PA Response Teams (PARTs) or senior teams designed purposely for each CCMD, specifically trained to integrate and operate with an IO mindset. CCDRs need trained and experienced PAs to help control and positively manage information. PARTs can drive a culture shift in the way PA is viewed.
- Third, restructure to maximize coordination and operations between PA, IO and planners. CCDRs must allow PA the flexibility to structure and organize at each CCMD in a way

that allows greater integration with IO and planners. An adaptive structure would also allow PA to shift manning in response to changes in the environment.

- Fourth, update joint publications to be in line with the JWC.⁴⁵ Given lengthy timelines for publication updates, consider creating localized standard operating procedures (SOPs). Consider developing PA-IO- and PA-planner-specific SOPs.
- Fifth, improve and streamline coordination with OSD, Joint Staff and across other CCMDs. Opening lines of communication increases information sharing and lessons learned. Consider adding weekly IO or planner meetings to PA battle-rhythm or inviting IO and planner personnel to PA staff meetings.
- Finally, consider cross-training opportunities for PAOs, IO and planner personnel, whether conducted at Joint or Service schools or locally. Cross-training increases understanding, awareness and team collaboration.

⁴⁵ Signature, release and dissemination of JP 3-04 aligns joint publications with the Joint Warfighting Concept.

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