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**COMMUNICATING FOR THE LONG WAR:
Options for Squadron Commanders**

by

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Preface

Terrorist attacks on US soil on 11 September 2001 shocked the US public. Directly after those events, US public opinion was high in support of military operations. The US public has grown tired of the negative stories regarding US military operations and public opinion has drastically declined. I believe there are several reasons for this decline in public support. One reason is terrorist organizations are using the advances in communication technology more efficient than the Department of Defense (DoD). I believe the upper echelons within the DoD and the armed services recognized this fact and changed their service doctrine. I believe that it is not enough for us to change doctrine. Individuals need to take action at the lower level to counter the information attacks made by adversaries of the United States. I believe this paper can serve two purposes. One purpose is to communicate to the lower echelons the importance of winning the information war and public opinion. The second purpose is to give the lower echelons some techniques where they can help win public support.

Abstract

Public opinion is critical for the United States to succeed in accomplishing its strategic objectives. Immediately after the United States experiences a crisis, public opinion is normally in support of US military forces and their operations. As time goes on, that public support tends to decline. Joint and service doctrine has changed to emphasize the need for public opinion and to provide direction for commanders to succeed in winning public support.

Commanders at all levels need to comprehend the doctrinal concepts of strategic communication, information operations, public affairs and propaganda. Advance in communication technology has made it increasingly easier for US adversaries to communicate their message. Commanders must also understand how the adversaries are communicating their message. Commanders and the service members they command play a critical role in winning public support. Usually commanders use formally trained personnel to handle public affair matters. But there is informal public affairs training and opportunities available to commanders that they can use to increase public support for operations.

INTRODUCTION

The world forever changed after 11 September 2001. After the events of 9/11, when terrorists attacked US soil by flying commercial airplanes into the World Trade Center and the Pentagon, there was an outcry by the US public to determine who was responsible for the attack. This swell of public support demanded the US government punish those who were responsible to ensure US citizens were not attacked again. President George W. Bush answered those demands. In October 2001, US forces began Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF). Public opinion was overwhelming in support of OEF. According to a Gallup survey in November 2001, 89 percent of those surveyed supported sending forces to Afghanistan while 9 percent did not support the deployment of troops.¹ As of August 2007, the support for OEF had dropped to 70 percent.² Even with public opinion declining, the US government continued to prosecute terrorist outside Afghanistan.

In March 2003, forces from the United States and other allied countries invaded Iraq for the purpose of conducting Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF). Again public opinion was very much in support of the operations. According to a Gallup poll, 75 percent of those surveyed supported the operations.³ Compare that statistic to 23 percent who did not support the operations.⁴ Less than three months after OIF had commenced President Bush announced major combat operations have been completed and mission accomplished. Five years after OIF begun, the public support for operations has reversed. A 2008 Gallup poll showed only 36 percent of those surveyed supported OIF.⁵ These statistics demonstrate public opinion is critical for long term strategic success in military operations.

In today's global environment, the opinion of the US public and the world public is essential for the United States to accomplish its strategic objectives. The US Chairman of the

Joint Chiefs of Staffs (CJCS) has concluded that public opinion is extremely important in joint operations. CJCS concluded IO is so important that guidance for communicating the strategic message has been included in various planning documents. Commanders, at all levels of warfare, need to recognize their actions will have an impact on public opinion. United States Air Force (USAF) squadron commanders and their Airmen can use various techniques to help communicated that strategic message.

The research methodology for this paper was a review and an analysis of current communication doctrine and practices. The paper will begin by defining various terms according to USAF and Joint Publications (JP). It will then examine how adversaries are currently using various techniques to communicate their message. The paper will then review training for public affairs officers. It will then conclude by providing recommendations for USAF squadron commanders and their Airmen to communicate the US strategic message.

STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION

There are several crucial concepts to understand with regard to public opinion. The first concept is that of strategic communications. JP 5.0 *Joint Operations Planning* defines strategic communication as “Focused United States Government efforts to understand and engage key audiences to create, strengthen, or preserve conditions favorable for the advancement of the US Government interests, policies, and objectives through the use of coordinated programs plans, themes, messages and products synchronized with the actions of all instruments of power.”⁶ Basically, strategic communications is the idea or message the US Government is trying to communicate to the US and world public. Others would define strategic communication as both message and action that needs to be integrated into the instruments of National Power.⁷ The US

Government agencies need to coordinate and synchronize their message throughout all operations and instruments of power.

This message can be communicated in various ways. It is critical for commanders to understand what the message the US Government wants to communicate. If a commander develops a communication plan that is not consistent with the overall strategic message, then the creditability of the US Government is lost. The Office of the Secretary of Defense (OSD) recognized how critical strategic communications have become in today's environment.

In September 2004, the Defense Science Board (DSB) Task Force on Strategic Communication issued a report to the OSD. The findings reiterated how the United States' ability to communicate to world populations is essential for the United States to accomplish its national objectives. The report emphasized the United States is engaged in a "generational and global struggle about ideas, not a war between the West and Islam."⁸ The report found the current concepts were outdated. It stated that "public diplomacy, public affairs, psychological operations (PSYOP) and open military information operations must be coordinated and energized."⁹ Although improvements were made, the 2006 Quadrennial Defense Review Report (QDR) continued to highlight the importance of strategic communications.

By law the QDR, is submitted by US Secretary of Defense every four years. It reviews procedures and process of the US Department of Defense (DoD). It then provides guidance to the DoD on areas for improvement. The 2006 QDR emphasized the need for all government agencies to integrate and coordinate their strategic message of US national security policy planning and operations. The QDR also stated that effective strategic communication should, "build and maintain credibility and trust with friends and foes alike, through an emphasis on consistency, veracity and transparency both in words and deeds. Such credibility is essential to

building trusted networks that counter ideological support for terrorism.”¹⁰ This statement underscores the necessity for strategic communications to target both friendly ideas as well as the ideas of our adversaries. The above quote from the 2006 QDR emphasizes the adage that commanders must keep in mind when conducting operations; “Actions speak louder than words.” In addition, the quote emphasizes the need for the information the US Government disseminates to be truthful.

The element of truth is where terrorist organizations have an advantage in the information war. US Government agencies and military commanders need to recognize the importance of truthful information in strategic communication. The necessity of truthful information tends to delay the strategic communication process. Information Operations (IO) should be structured to support the quickest distribution of information possible.

INFORMATION AND INFLUENCE OPERATIONS

Air Force Doctrine Document (AFDD) 2-5 *Information Operations* defines IO as the integrated employment of the capabilities of influence operations, electronic warfare operations (EW) and network warfare operations (NW) in concert with specified integrated control enablers to influence, disrupt, corrupt, or usurp adversarial human and automated decision making while protecting our own.¹¹ All three of these operational elements are related to IO. Assets or equipment used in EW or NW can be used in IO to transmit the intended message. Influence operations has the greatest relationship to IO. Influence operations can help accomplish objectives at the different levels of warfare by affecting behaviors, safeguarding critical operational information, and by distributing truthful information to the appropriate audiences to achieve the necessary impact.¹² Influence operations include activities such as counter

propaganda operations, PSYOP, military deception and public-affairs (PA) operations.¹³ A review of US government operations can serve as an example of the effect of IO.

The terrorist attacks on 11 September 2001, occurred roughly eight months after President George W. Bush took office. At the time of the attacks the Bush administration was attempting to organize their strategic message. The terrorist attacks forced the administration to demonstrate a “sense of urgency” regarding information operations.¹⁴ Several attempts to organize DoD IO efforts were made.

In the beginning of 2002, the DoD announced the creation of the Office of Strategic Influence (OSI). This office was comprised to be of US Army PSYOP, USAF special operations (SPECOPs) and a limited number of DoD civilians. This office almost never came to creation because of a disagreement between the Secretary of Defense and a senior DoD PA official¹⁵. The purpose of this office was to counter adversary propaganda using human and technology techniques. This office was eventually established in time for OIF.

The DoD used several techniques in OIF to conduct IO. One technique the DoD used was to embed journalists with Army and Marine Corps units. This allowed the journalists to see and report first hand information in a timely manner. This technique was in response to criticism from OEF that the military did not release information in a timely manner.¹⁶ Another technique the DoD employed in OIF was to concentrate on the human element of war.

One way the DoD used human factors to influence IO was when the DoD exposed the fact that senior Iraqi military leaders were bribed before combat operations began. These leaders took money in return for not fighting.¹⁷ Another incident where the DoD employed a human factor technique came directly from President Bush. During a nationally televised speech, President Bush spoke directly to Iraqi generals to discourage the use weapons of mass

destruction. During the speech, President Bush said, “anyone ordering the use of weapons of mass destruction will be treated as a war criminal and likely executed.”¹⁸ These are attempts to influence actions by the Iraqi leadership by disseminating information regarding the consequences of their actions. In the beginning of OIF, the DoD looked to target the structured Iraqi military with their IO campaign. As operations progressed, the target of IO has changed.

Unlike previous IO campaigns where the target audience was a conventional army or state, the current nature of OIF is unconventional and the target audience is a guerrilla force. As a guerilla force, the insurgents in Iraq do not have the military ability to fight coalition forces directly. To overcome this weakness, the insurgents gain an advantage by conducting operations in the information environment.¹⁹ Insurgents in Iraq are using a three prong approach by attacking the people, the state and then the army with their information message.²⁰ US forces are trying to counter these attacks.

Maj Norman Emery (USA), an IO officer with Special Operations command, is one officer who has tried to counter the information attacks of insurgents. He claims “the goal is to control the environment by influencing population in order to build popular support in key cities and to erode direct and indirect support of guerillas in Iraq.”²¹ Emery further claims the United States must accomplish two effects to succeed in Iraq.

Emery first argues the United States must convince the Iraqi people that the presence in Iraq is only temporary and the presence will benefit the Iraqi people. This would be an example of using IO to accomplish operational and strategic objectives. His second argument is US forces should persuade Iraqis that assisting insurgents is not in Iraq’s best interest. He continues to state that US forces need to also convince Iraq’s to deceive the insurgents.²² This second argument focuses on using IO to accomplish tactical objectives. US forces in Iraq are using IO

on insurgents and on the Iraqi population. However, IO must not just focus on the Iraqi population. It must also focus on the US and world population.

Author Phillip Evert claims, “Warfare is not possible, however, when taxpayers are not willing to foot the bill for maintaining armies, and people (men in particular) are not prepared on a large scale to risk their lives as well as to kill unknown other on command.”²³ Public opinion polls tend to support this claim. When OIF began in March 2003, according to a Gallup poll, 75 percent of Americans supported operations in Iraq. Compare that figure to 2008 where only 36 percent of the Americans surveyed supported operations. In 2008, 68 percent of those surveyed thought it was a mistake to send troops to Iraq.²⁴ Evert’s claim and the statistics demonstrate that any IO campaign the US government executes must target both the adversary and the US population. One way an IO campaign can influence the public opinion of the US population is in the way it executes its PA operations.

PUBLIC AFFAIRS

PA operations are vital to any IO campaign. There is a distinction between PA operations and IO. USAF Doctrine categorizes PA as a tenant of IO that falls underneath influence operations. According to the Defense Information School (DINFOS) PA operations are a related function of IO, not just a critical capability in support of IO. Another difference between PA operations and IO is that PA operations are concerned with truthful information and the purpose of IO seek to deceive the adversary. PA operations and the information it distributes should seek to assist the accomplishment of the IO objectives.²⁵ In a September 2004 memo to the Service Chiefs of Staff and Combatant Commanders, the CJCS, Gen Richard Myers, summed up the relation of PA operations and IO.

In the memo he described the purpose of PA operations is to inform the US public and international audiences and to support the combatant commander at all levels of war. He stated IO operations should be focused to influence the adversary operations through the use of deception. Myers continued to highlight that, “PA and IO conduct planning, message development and media analysis, the efforts differ with respect to audience, scope and intent, and must remain separate.”²⁶ This statement emphasizes the need for PA operations and IO to be integrated during a campaign. However, because the support of public opinion is critical to mission accomplishment, PA operations need to remain a separate entity so its credibility is not jeopardized by the distribution of false information.

DINFOS, the DoD School responsible for providing entry-level PA training for all DoD services, identifies three functions of PA. The first function is community relations. This function serves to foster the relationship between civilian and military leaders around the base or post. The second function is public information. This second function focuses on providing information to external media outlets. The third function is command information. The third function focuses on increasing attention to a unit’s mission, personnel and objectives. The last two functions are what can be considered “traditional” PA functions. Joint publications also seek to define PA operations.

JP 3-61 *Public Affairs* states the mission is to support the Joint Force Commander by communicating truthful and factual unclassified information about DoD activities to US, allied, national, international and internal audiences. Unlike USAF doctrine, Joint doctrine does not categorize PA as a part of IO. Joint doctrine describes PA as a related function of IO.

Joint doctrine also states PA operations should assist the media and military. PA operations set the environment and rules for interaction between the media and the military. By

accomplishing this, the media is able to gain the access it requires to publish a story. PA operations also need to protect military operations by ensuring appropriate information and operations security (OPSEC).²⁷ Just as joint doctrine discusses PA operations, Air Force doctrine also addresses PA operations.

AFDD 2-5.3 *Public Affairs Operations* is the publication that outlines how the Air Force will conduct PA operations. AFDD 2-5.3 states PA operations “are a force multiplier by analyzing and influencing the information environment’s effect on military operations.”²⁸ PA operations can be a force multiplier in various ways. One way is by promoting stories that shed a positive light on US operations. When these stories have a positive impact on public opinion, operator’s morale is improved and operations can be increased. AFDD 2-5.3 also addresses the impact effective PA operations have on accomplishing strategic objectives.

One characteristic of effective SAF/PA operations is that it should be timely. In today’s environment of globalization, information and ideas can be transmitted across the world in a matter of seconds. PA operations can use this near instantaneous capability to communicate the strategic, operational and tactical messages to audiences all around the world. The technological advances of today allow leaders of all nations to comprehend the unfiltered strategic message and goals of the United States in a relatively short time.

Another characteristic of SAF/PA operations is the element of truthfulness in the information it disseminates. Because some incidents or issues are complicated, it takes a substantial amount of time to uncover the truth behind the incident. In these situations, it is vital for PA operations to continue to update the media on the incident. With the constant flow of information, PA operations can accomplish two objectives. By keeping the media informed with the most current data, it prevents the media from presenting only one side of the issue. The

second objective that can be accomplished is it will avoid the perception that a “cover-up” is underway to protect its own interests or personnel. PA operations not only distribute truthful information, it may also be used to counterpropaganda information from the adversary.

Propaganda can be defined as “any systematic, widespread dissemination or promotion of particular ideas, doctrines, practices, etc, to further one’s own cause or to damage an opposing one.”²⁹ It is important to note that this definition does not mention any element of truthful information. When most public hear the word propaganda, many Americans think in a negative connotation of the word. This tendency can be linked to the practice of Adolf Hitler in World War II.³⁰ Because of this negative connotation, PA operations should not practice propaganda, but it should operate in order to counter adversary propaganda.

PROPAGANDA

Air Force doctrine defines counterpropaganda operations as “activities to identify and counter adversary propaganda and expose adversary attempts to influence friendly populations and military forces situational understanding.”³¹ As stated earlier, an important characteristic of PA operations is the timely dissemination of information. This is critical in counterpropaganda. A key tactic in defeating adversary propaganda is to get the information out first. Because it is more time consuming for a PA staff to counter an adversary’s false statement, it is important for PA operations to beat the “enemy to the punch”. By distributing the most current information before the adversary, PA operations can shape the context of public opinion and negate the impact of adversary propaganda.³²

Cable News Network reporter Peter Arnett’s reports from Baghdad in Operation Desert Storm can be example of the effect of distributing information first and the affect it has on public opinion. In this situation, Peter Arnett reported that an attack by coalition forces injured and

killed a large portion of civilians. Peter Arnett was not able to substantiate the claims by Iraqi officials; yet he reported the story. Based on this story the world began to become skeptic of the United States claim to avoid civilian casualties. After this story was reported, an increase in anti-coalition opinion was noted in the Arab world.³³ In Operation Desert Storm, the US and coalition forces fought a kinetic war against a conventional forces.

Past adversaries of the United States have used propaganda to discredit the United States. Today's enemies are no different. However because of technological advances of today's global environment, the speed at which they spread their propaganda has drastically increased. Today's Global War on Terror (GWOT) is a different type of war. It is a war not fought between conventional armies; rather it is war of ideas. Technology allows ideas and information to travel all over the world faster than it takes to move armies across the world. There have been several studies regarding how the terrorist organizations use technology to communicate their message.

TERRORIST COMMUNICATION METHODS

One such study was conducted by Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty (RFE/RL) in 2007. The report, entitled *Iraqi Insurgent Media: The War of Images and Ideas*, studied how Sunni terrorist groups were using the advances in communication technology to hinder US operations and recruit future terrorists. The report studied products, the producers and the way the terrorist deliver their messages. The study had several key findings.

In studying the products terrorists use to communicate their message, the report categorized the products into two categories: text and audiovisual materials. The report found that text products were the preferred method for the terrorist organizations to use. One type of text product used by terrorists was operational statements. These statements normally communicated the outcome of attacks on coalition forces. Other types of statements were

operational press releases. These press releases attempt to communicate the reason and results of attacks. According to the report, the press releases attempt to portray how the Sunni movement views itself and may not accurately reflect a realistic picture. In March 2007, approximately 966 statements were made by 11 different terrorist organizations in Iraq.³⁴

These statements used various terms such as “crusaders” and “worshippers of the cross” to describe coalition forces. These statements can be classified as propaganda statements. In addition, these terms seek to reinforce the terrorist’s idea that the coalition forces are fighting a religious war. Because there are foreign terrorists fighting in Iraq, these statements of a religious war only seek to legitimize the global jihadist movement.³⁵ The report also noted other types of statements were issued by terrorist organizations.

The other types of statements can be categorized as topical statements. According to the report, these statements differ from operational statements in that the topical statements address issues broader than simply military operations. The topical statements were normally longer than operational statements and covered political issues. The report reviewed several statements from various terrorist organizations. The report noted that differences in statements provided some evidence of possible divisions in terrorist organizations.

Another type of text products terrorists are producing was categorized as inspirational text. The RFE/RL report found terrorists were using martyr biographies and poetry to inspire their members. Martyr biographies were detailed accounts of the lives of terrorists who have died in the GWOT. These biographies seek to make the terrorists seen as heroes to their cause. The report noted the creation of martyr biographies demonstrated the increased professionalism of terrorist organizations and their desire to communicate their message. Besides the martyr biographies, the report also found that poems were posted on internet websites. Some of these

poems would be used in songs to inspire their members. The report also found terrorist organizations were using periodicals and books to distribute information.

Another type of product the terrorists were using was audiovisual products. The report found products varied from recordings of attacks on coalition forces to speeches made by insurgent leaders. These recordings were posted on several websites. Most of the recorded attacks were short in duration. The recordings also had commentary with a religious undertone; again reinforcing the claim that the GWOT is a war of ideas.

Besides the short video recordings, the report discovered terrorists were producing and releasing films on websites. The report found the topics of these films varied. The report found that films were compilations of attack videos, biographies of martyrs, overviews of campaigns, and motivational films. Although the topic of the films differed, the theme of a religious war was evident in the films.

In addition to films, the RFE/RL report discovered recorded audio statements and songs were posted on various websites. Topics for the audio statements included addresses by terrorist leaders, newscasts of attacks and operations conducted against coalition forces. Songs posted on websites were heavily nationalistic in nature. These songs would be used in conjunction with films and other videos in an attempt to inspire its members.

The RFE/RL report discovered several findings. First, terrorist in Iraq are using the internet to communicate its message in a world-wide media campaign. The second finding was that Iraqi terrorist media network is full of global jihadist messages. A third finding was the amount of information on the terrorist websites signifies the demand for this information in the Arab regions. A fourth finding is the mainstream Arab media outlets, knowingly or unknowingly, increase the effectiveness of the terrorist messages by transmitting their messages.

A fifth finding was that terrorist propaganda network is decentralized and does not have an infrastructure. The lack of centralization makes it difficult for coalition forces to kinetically target the media network.

The RFE/RL report is significant besides the findings stated above. The report is important because it also demonstrates the terrorists understanding of how important information is in a war of ideas. In addition, the fact that the terrorist media network is decentralized and does not have a bureaucratic structure for accountability purposes, they are not concerned with the truthfulness of their message. This gives them an advantage over US PA operations which must be concerned with the truth of their information. Commanders at all levels of warfare have a role in neutralizing this advantage.

THE COMMANDER'S ROLE

Commanders in today's military environment must realize that with the advances in modern media technology, information can travel across the world at the speed of light. Commanders must also recognize their actions and the actions of those they command can be disseminated in an instant. These actions will be viewed differently depending on the audience's culture. There have been writings regarding the role the commanders play in media relations. One such writing is a US Naval War College paper.

In *The Audiences of the Military-Media Stage: An Operational Commander's Role* Capt Kenneth Iverson (USN) took a historical review of previous military-media relationships and how those relationships affected the accomplishment of national strategic objectives. He first analyzed the current military-media relationships. He then discussed the military-media relationship in the Civil War to Vietnam to Operation Desert Storm.

In today's environment Capt Iverson acknowledged that just about anybody can report a story. Today an individual, not trained in the journalism, can use a camera or video camera on a cell phone to record an incident. Within minutes, this story may appear on a web site or emailed to others without any context or follow-up questions. Some twenty-four hour a day media outlets encourage this type of reporting. Capt Iverson noted that this type of journalism poses problems for commanders. He concluded that this type of journalism "has no defined list of requirement or qualifications, no enforceable formalized code of ethics and no governing, responsible body".³⁶

Capt Iverson made several recommendations. First, it is critical for commanders to recognize the impact the media can have on public opinion and planning should take into account this fact. Second, he recommends training for media personnel so they have a better understanding of military operations. Third, Capt Iverson recommends setting clear and definite ground rules for both media and military to follow during media-military interactions. A final recommendation he makes is that commanders should use military training and education to train their subordinates in order to make the military-media relationship as beneficial as possible. One tool a commander can use to foster their military-media relationship is their PA Office.³⁷ The PA office has equipment and personnel trained to handle situations that will affect operations and public opinion.

PUBLIC AFFAIRS TRAINING IN THE USAF

The organization tasked with training PA officials for the DoD is the Defense Information School (DINFOS) at Fort Meade, Maryland. DINFOS conducts the Public Affairs Qualification Course (PAQC). The purpose of the PAQC is, "to provide entry-level public affairs training for mid-to-senior level non-commissioned officers and commissioned officers

from all US military services, selected foreign nations and US government agency civilians selected for PA assignments at all levels of command.”³⁸

The PAQC is offered in two formats. The first type of format is a residence course which is forty-three training days in length. The resident course is offered five times a year. The residence PAQC has an annual class limit of 300 individuals.

The other type of format is an advanced distributed learning (ADL) program. The ADL program is offered twice a year. It is a six month program that uses an interactive training program which is led by a instructor at PAQC. Unlike other ADL or “correspondence” courses where the student can complete the course at their own pace, the PAQC ADL course has several suspenses that students are required to meet throughout the course. The annual class limit for the ADL program is 96 individuals.

The residence program is structured into eight different functional areas which constitutes 399 hours. The main teaching methodology is lecture. The PAQC covers a variety of topics ranging from PA philosophy to the growth of technology to reporting to interviewing and media relations. Both courses culminate with a three day field training exercise (FTX). The purpose of the FTX is to allow students the opportunity to demonstrate various learned PA techniques in an operational scenario. The PAQCs are primarily available for those DoD members who are assigned to perform PA functions.

In addition to the PAQC, DINFOS offers the Coast Guard Public Affairs Course. This a one week collateral PA duty course designed for US Coast Guard (USCG) members who do not have the manpower for PA specialists. Although this course is designed for the USCG, representatives at DINFOS have expressed interest in expanding the one week course to include other services and military specialties.³⁹ The applicability of this course will be discussed later.

PA training is not just limited to DINFOS and PA specialists. In the USAF future and new squadron commanders also receive PA training. Prior to assuming command of their squadron, these individuals attend a course sponsored by the major command of their squadron. This course covers a variety of topics related to command. One portion of the course is PA training. Two commands that provide PA instruction are Pacific Air Forces (PACAF) and Air Combat Command (ACC).

The PACAF course is held three times a year for approximately 40 commanders. During the commanders course PACAF PA provides approximately one hour of instruction to the students.⁴⁰ The instruction focuses on tools commanders can use, message development and message delivery techniques. The current instruction did not reference the use of web logs (BLOGS). However, PACAF PA has recognized the emerging impact of BLOGS and will discuss them in the summer 2009 course.⁴¹

ACC holds its commanders course five times a year. The 45 minute ACC PA portion of the course encourages commanders to have their Airmen actively tell the USAF story. ACC stresses the importance of having a unified message from the top down. ACC provides instruction on how to tell that story using external sources and community relations. ACC PA also recognizes the importance of BLOGS and is developing a plan to increase the course attention to BLOGS.⁴²

The training squadron commanders receive is helpful but it is very limited in time and depth. In both PACAF and ACC the training lessons are limited to one hour sessions. There are other options for squadron commanders to use to help communicate the US message.

TECHNIQUES FOR A SQUADRON COMMANDER

Many individuals acknowledge the importance of controlling information in the GWOT. USAF squadron commanders can play a role in winning the information battle. The techniques listed below are generic and should be tailored to the mission and size of the individual squadron.

The first technique is to increase awareness and attention to the importance of PA operations. A squadron commander's primary instrument in the information war is the wing PA officer. However, access to this individual can be limited. Some squadrons assign an individual an additional duty as a PA representative. However, training is limited for these representatives.

One way to increase their PA representatives training is to send their PA representative to the Coast Guard Public Affairs Course. The purpose of the course is to train individuals the necessary skills to manage a PA program. According to the DINFOS Training Program of Instruction, the course is designed to "provide instruction in the theory, concepts, policy and principles of unit public affairs programs, mass communications theory, media relations."⁴³

Comparatively so, this type of training is relatively inexpensive and the benefits the squadron receives will outweigh the cost. Having a representative with this type of training in the squadron can increase access to a PA specialist. Once trained, the PA representative can be an expert of PA operations and can train and advise other squadron members on PA issues. One such issue the PA representative can advise squadron members on is the use of BLOGS.

The increases in communication technology and the increase use of BLOGS have proven critical in shaping public opinion. According to a US Joint Forces Command report, the "blogosphere" doubles in size every six months.⁴⁴ This report discussed the procedures used by US Central Command (CENTCOM) to engage the "blogosphere".

CENTCOM's operations included monitoring existing blogs for mis-information. When CENTCOM's operator's found information that contradicted official accounts, the operators would respond to the BLOG with links to official information. CENTCOM's operators would ask the BLOG to post the links on their BLOG. Another technique CENTCOM operators would use, when they saw mis-information on a BLOG, was to post a discussion on the BLOG. Most BLOGs allow for individuals to post discussions on the site. CENTCOM operators would post links to official released information in the discussion.⁴⁵ This would give individuals the opportunity and contact information to seek out other credible information to draw their own conclusion. Granted, squadrons do not have the manpower of CENTCOM to concentrate their efforts on BLOGs, but the squadron PA representatives can encourage and train squadron members to use the same techniques.

Many Airmen today are technologically intelligent and use BLOGS such as Facebook and MySpace. According to the Facebook website, there are over 150 million users of Facebook. In addition, 70 percent of Facebook users are outside the United States.⁴⁶ This demonstrates a tremendous potential audience for Airmen to tell their stories.

PA representatives and Airmen should also post links to official stories to counter incorrect information that is posted on other BLOGS. As stated earlier, terrorists are using the internet to communicate their message and recruit individuals. Airmen can use the internet to counter incorrect information as well as spread the USAF message.

Another BLOG was created by the USAF to take advantage of the technological advancement of BLOGs. In December 2008, the USAF announced the creation of "MyBase". This BLOG is located online via www.secondlife.com. The purpose of "MyBase" is to give the general public access to the USAF. According to Maj Gen Erwin Lessel, Director of Plans,

Programs, Requirements and Assessments in the Air Education and Training Command, the long term goal is to integrate virtual worlds into USAF education.⁴⁷

By logging onto the Second Life website an individual can create a virtual character called an avatar. The individual can then move around in the virtual world and hold discussions with others on line. Because many individuals may not be skilled operators in the second life environment, further technical training may be required. There are more than 15 million accounts on Second Life.⁴⁸ This represents another large audience for USAF Airmen to communicate their message. Squadron PA representatives should encourage and train their Airmen to use these interactive sites. The training should be on the technical aspects of using these sites. In addition PA representatives should provide instruction on maintaining good OPSEC when using these sites. A delicate balance needs to be maintained in communicating the strategic message and maintaining good OPSEC.

In today's environment, information is critical to mission success at all levels of warfare. When a squadron commander encourages their Airmen using BLOGs, they must also remind them to safeguard information that can affect mission accomplishment. In order to ensure good OPSEC, the squadron commander and PA representatives should monitor BLOGs to ensure Airmen are practicing good OPSEC. In addition, PA representatives should brief proper OPSEC techniques when given the opportunity at unit training day. The key element in implementing these opportunities is the squadron commander.

Different squadrons have different personnel and different mission. It is up to the squadron commander to decide how much emphasis they want to place on IO. Some commanders may see the value while others may not have the man power to emphasize IO. It is

the responsibility of all Airmen and commanders to understand the actions that they take can and will have an impact on the political, operational and tactical levels of war.

CONCLUSION

Immediately after the attacks on the United States by terrorist on 11 September 2001, there was an immediate out cry for action to be taken against those who committed the acts. When the military answered the call, public support for the armed forces was extremely high. Almost nine years later, US forces have defeated armies in Afghanistan and Iraq; however they have lost public support. In today's fast paced information environment, US and world public opinion are critical for the US to accomplish its strategic objectives.

Recent DoD and military leaders have realized the importance of information in the GWOT and have changed doctrine to reflect this importance. Joint and service doctrines have been updated to include strategic communications, information operations and public affairs. It is important for commanders to understand that the GWOT is a war of ideas not of armies. In addition, commanders and leaders must convey the stable and creditable message when employing the instruments of power. If they do not, then the GWOT will drag out and the creditability of the US forces will be diminished. An option that military leaders can to accomplish is to communicate and train their individuals on the importance of IO.

The technological advances in communication media have helped the adversaries of the United States to spread their message. Terrorist organizations use with great success the internet and other audiovisual techniques to communicate and recruit future terrorists. Once a story is out to the public it becomes more difficult to change the public's opinion about the truth of the story. Currently terrorists have an advantage in the speed at which they disseminate information. Their

organizations are not structured to support accountability for truthful information. The DoD's information is required to be truthful and timely.

PA individuals are trained to deliver truthful information in a timely manner. There are other training opportunities for services to take advantage of in order to help win public opinion. Squadron commanders can have PA representatives in their squadron to increase their access to PA operations. Another technique a squadron commander can use to communicate the strategic message is to train and encourage their Airman to use BLOGs to spread the positive stories of the USAF.

The US DoD has recognized the importance of information in operations. It has adjusted at a relatively slow pace. If the US DoD does not continue and increase the rate at which it adjusts to IO, the United States stature in the world will be weakened. Every person in the DoD has a responsibility and the opportunity to communicate this message. Now is the time for all DoD individuals to step up and take action to help win the war on ideas and public opinion.

ENDNOTES

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- ¹ Gallup Corporation, “Slim Majority Supports Anti-Terrorism Action in Afghanistan, Pakistan.”
- ² Ibid.
- ³ Gallup Corporation, “Gallup’s Pulse of Democracy: The War in Iraq.”
- ⁴ Ibid.
- ⁵ Ibid.
- ⁶ Joint Chief of Staff Publication 5-0, pg GL-22.
- ⁷ Josten, “Strategic Communication: Key Enabler for Elements of National Power”, pg 16.
- ⁸ Office of the Undersecretary of Defense for Acquisition, Technology and Logistics, “Report of the Defense Science Board Task Force on Strategic Communication”, pg 2
- ⁹ Ibid, pg 3.
- ¹⁰ Department of Defense, *Quadrennial Defense Review Report*, pg 92.
- ¹¹ Air Force Doctrine Document 2-5, pg 1.
- ¹² Guevin, “Information Operations” pg 122.
- ¹³ Ibid.
- ¹⁴ Armistead, *Information Operations*, pg 133.
- ¹⁵ Ibid, pg 135.
- ¹⁶ Ibid, pg 153.
- ¹⁷ Ibid pg 154.
- ¹⁸ Ibid.
- ¹⁹ Emery, “Information Operations in Iraq” pg 11.
- ²⁰ Ibid.
- ²¹ Ibid, pg 13.
- ²² Ibid, pg 13.
- ²³ Quoted in Lukens, “ Public Support for the Global War on Terrorism: Do We Have Want it Takes?” pg 2.
- ²⁴ Gallup Corporation, “Gallup’s Pulse of Democracy: The War in Iraq”.
- ²⁵ Defense Information School,
http://www.dinfos.dma.mil/DinfosWeb/adl/elearn/ContentModuleDisplay_public.asp?un=412&pon=2&cmID=417&courseTPI=PAOQC-ADL-NR. (accessed 13 January 2009).
- ²⁶ Myers, “Policy on Public Affairs Relationship to Information Operations”.
- ²⁷ Joint Chief of Staff Publication, pg I-3.
- ²⁸ Air Force Doctrine Document 2-5.3, pg 19.
- ²⁹ Paul, *How to Detect Media Bias and Propaganda*, pg 8.
- ³⁰ <http://www.propagandacritic.com/articles/intro.why.html>. (accessed 21 August 2007).
- ³¹ Air Force Defense Doctrine 2-5, pg 15.
- ³² Ibid.
- ³³ Iverson, “The Audience of the Military-Media Stage: An Operational Commander’s Role”, pg 14.
- ³⁴ Kimmage, “Iraqi Insurgent Media: The War of Images and Ideas”, pg 8.
- ³⁵ Ibid.
- ³⁶ Iverson, “The Audience of the Military-Media Stage: An Operational Commander’s Role”, pg 2.
- ³⁷ Iverson, “The Audience of the Military-Media Stage: An Operational Commander’s Role”, pg 16.
- ³⁸ Defense Information School, “Training Program for DINFOS Public Affairs Qualification Course”, pg 3.
- ³⁹ Lt Col William Bigelow (Director, Directorate of Training Defense Information School) in discussion with author, 13 January 2009.
- ⁴⁰ Lt Col Donald Langley (PACAF PA/PAD) email to author, 26 January 2009.
- ⁴¹ Lt Col Donald Langley (PACAF PA/PAD) email to author, 26 January 2009.
- ⁴² Maj Michelle Coghil (ACC/PAO) email to author, 2 February 2009.
- ⁴³ Defense Information School, “Training Program for DINFOS Coast Guard Public Affairs Course”, pg 3.
- ⁴⁴ US Joint Forces Command, “Engaging the Blogosphere”.
- ⁴⁵ Ibid.
- ⁴⁶ <http://www.facebook.com/press/info.php?statistics>. (accessed 25 Jan 2009).
- ⁴⁷ Knuteson, “Virtual Air Force base opens doors to public”, pg 1.
- ⁴⁸ Ibid

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