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<td>04-14-2013</td>
<td>Master of Operational Studies Research Paper</td>
<td>August 2012 - February 2013</td>
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9. SPONSOR/MONITORS AGENCY NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES). Enter the name and address of the organization(s) financially responsible for and monitoring the work.

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MASTER OF OPERATIONAL STUDIES

FROM MEDIA MANAGERS TO PUBLIC COMMUNICATORS: A CONCEPTION OF 21ST CENTURY MARINE CORPS PUBLIC AFFAIRS

SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF OPERATIONAL STUDIES

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Title: From Media Managers to Public Communicators: A Conception of 21st Century Marine Corps Public Affairs

Author: Major Carrie Batson, United States Marine Corps

Thesis: The complexity of the military’s operating environment and the increased demands and challenges of public communication necessitate the Marine Corps’ expansion and recalibration of the role of Public Affairs.

Discussion: As the Marine Corps resets after a decade of war and prepares for the future security environment, several present day realities underscore the Corps’ need to change its conception of Public Affairs (PA): 1) the inability of the military to achieve its objectives solely through the use of force; 2) the importance of public support in achieving military and national aims; and 3) the challenge of a more global, interactive, and transparent communication environment in which military actions and policies undergo increased public scrutiny and discussion. As a result, the Marine Corps must adopt a new understanding of both PA’s role within the organization and its mission in support of operational goals. Rather than merely “telling the Marine Corps story” through media relations, PA should facilitate the Marine Corps’ navigation of the communication environment as well as its relationship building with publics that can affect the success or failure of the military mission. Additionally PA should engage in dialogue with external stakeholders to understand their issues and concerns in order to integrate them into organizational decision-making. These endeavors will help the Marine Corps mitigate conflict and reconcile its goals with stakeholders’ interests. Developing this enhanced capability will necessitate commitment and patience, as well as major changes to how the Marine Corps mans, trains and equips PA. However, military success in the 21st century demands it.

Conclusion: The Marine Corps must update PA’s role and mission, the communication model upon which PA efforts are based, and the process by which the Corps conducts and organizes for communication. This “modernized” PA capability will pay dividends for the Marine Corps as it operates in a world of real-time, interactive, and global communication.
Introduction

On November 14, 2012, the traffic on Twitter was similar to that of any other day—at least until Israel’s declaration of war. The Israel Defense Force (IDF) made history by announcing a military action, Operation Pillar of Defense, through a 137-character tweet: “The IDF has begun a widespread campaign on terror sites & operatives in the #Gaza Strip, chief among them #Hamas & Islamic Jihad targets.”¹ Not long after, the IDF released another tweet explaining that they had just hit their first target: Ahmed Al-Jabari, head of Hamas’ military wing. Concurrently, they published a blog post explaining why Jabari was targeted. Three hours later, the IDF uploaded a video to YouTube showing a missile hitting Jabari’s car as it drove through Gaza. This “live-tweeting” and near real-time imagery release continued throughout the conflict as the IDF sought public support in two ways: 1) by increasing transparency about Israeli decisions and actions, and 2) by interacting directly with numerous publics rather than depending solely on daily press conferences and news agencies to communicate with the world.²

The IDF leveraged a host of social media to provide information, visual documentation, and context about the operation.³ Supporters were encouraged to “like” the IDF’s Facebook posts and to share with their own social media networks IDF-created products like infographics (“400 rockets from Gaza hit Israel in the last 3 days”), photos (“Damage caused by rockets fired from Gaza”), and videos (“How does the IDF minimize harm to Palestinian civilians in Gaza?”).⁴ As spokespersons from both the IDF and Hamas sparred via their public Twitter accounts, supporters and detractors of the IDF operation engaged in a real-time debate on the IDF’s Facebook page. Millions watched IDF videos and thousands shared the IDF’s Facebook posts and products with their own social networks, broadening the public debate. As this second front
of the conflict unfolded on the web, one pundit wondered if this was the future of warfare. Another saw it as the “most meaningful change in our consumption of war in over 20 years.”

Disagreement exists about the tactical execution and effectiveness of the IDF social media strategy. However, the employment of a robust social media effort to gain global support for a military action is a logical extension of what the world had already witnessed numerous times at the street level: citizen activists using new technology to mobilize public support for their causes. Examples range from the toppling of governments (e.g., the Arab Spring) to exposing global corporate practices that cause environmental damage (e.g., Nestlé and BP). As the Marine Corps resets after a decade of war and plans for the future security environment, it must prepare for this world of real-time, interactive, and global communication. This new reality is a major reason why the Marine Corps must employ Public Affairs in a new way.

To support this position, this paper will examine lessons learned from more than a decade of military operations and will address both changes in the communication environment and the implications of these changes. Next, the paper will recommend changes to PA’s role and mission, the communication model upon which PA bases its efforts, as well as the process by which PA organizes for and conducts communication.

**Learning from the Past**

While communication strategies have always played a role in military operations, changes over the past 20 years have made communication a more complicated and yet essential component of military success. The Joint Staff’s recent study, “A Decade of War,” notes many of these changes and highlights eleven enduring lessons from the past ten years of military operations. The study does not focus solely on Afghanistan and Iraq but on a range of military operations conducted by U.S. troops, thereby aiding a more comprehensive review of future
requirements. While most of the report has implications for future communication efforts, of note are two timeless lessons that must be relearned once again.

The first lesson addresses the military’s need to understand better the multi-faceted dimensions of the operating environment. While not cited in the report, Dr. Colin Gray’s assertion that war is a product of seven contexts—political, socio-cultural, economic, historical, technological, military-strategic, and geopolitical/geostrategic—underscores the importance of this lesson. Yet, the Joint Staff report found that such a nuanced understanding was “often hindered by a focus on traditional adversaries and a neglect of information concerning the host-nation population.”

The second lesson cites the importance of winning the “battle for the narrative” to achieving military objectives at all levels of war. This point speaks to an essential truth about war: as an instrument of government policy, it cannot be separated from its political objective or from the society by which it is waged. Thus, any government must be concerned with popular sentiment as it engages in war for reasons of “fear, honor, and interest.”

The two lessons outlined above frame this paper’s major premise: public opinion matters. This includes not only domestic public opinion but global public opinion as well. As one life-long diplomat explains, “This is not to say that our national interests should be held hostage to foreign opinion. But, it is to insist that we ignore foreign public opinion at our peril.” Furthermore, U.S. efforts to inform foreign publics should be based on the following:

[Public diplomacy] assumes that the ideas and perceptions of ordinary human beings count. It assumes that abroad, as well as at home, every major strategy, policy or diplomatic initiative must have public support in order to succeed. Publics do not make foreign policy in the [U.S.] or anywhere else. But they do, in democratic countries in particular, set the parameters within which policy is made and carried out.
As history confirms, warfare cannot be solely focused on the application of firepower.\textsuperscript{19} Engagement with domestic and foreign publics is required for any military operation; within each military service there must be professional communicators managing (if not executing) that engagement. Yet, the U.S. military has repeatedly overlooked this point. As a 2001 Defense Science Board report observed: “America’s political and military leaders too often appreciate [information capabilities and their] value only during a crisis or in retrospect when hostilities are concluded.”\textsuperscript{20} Eleven years later, the Joint Staff study expressed a similar sentiment, stating that the military remains “slow to recognize the importance of information” in its operations.\textsuperscript{21} The Joint Staff also identified a lack of leadership emphasis and inadequate resources for an ostensible “instrument of national power.” As the U.S. military prepares for the future, it must ensure that it does not once again forget these critical historical lessons.

**Continually Evolving Communication Environment**

Recent events across the globe demonstrate just how much the information environment has changed from a few decades ago when “technology-limited citizens” were passive consumers of news and information. Then, news creation and information dissemination existed as a top-down, centralized process where “gatekeepers” in the media, government, and other positions of power decided what was newsworthy and therefore worth sharing. Today, communication is a bottom-up, decentralized process involving constant interaction and dialogue among a global network of citizens—a network facilitated by the Internet, enabled by personal electronic devices, and comprised of competing and disparate voices that now can be heard beyond national borders. These changes represent new ways in which publics seek, obtain, and share information; form and mobilize groups; and participate in the news-making process.

This new communication landscape provides but one example of what Joseph Nye sees
as a broader shift of power from states to non-state actors. As he explains, while “states will remain the dominant actor on the world stage...they will find the stage far more crowded and difficult to control.”22 The democratization of information means that government and military policies and actions today are increasingly the subject of intense public discourse and scrutiny that “extends beyond traditional borders and boundaries of politics, geography, time, language, and technology.”23 Indeed, the opinions of a growing number of foreign publics can affect the military’s ability to achieve its goals. This, and information’s ubiquity, necessitate that information should not be something leveraged solely by the State Department.24 It can and also should be a military tool.25 As the U.S. Advisory Commission on Public Diplomacy explained:

Whereas in the past a single agency was responsible for facilitating and shaping public awareness and perception of the U.S., today this is a whole-of-government affair.... Today’s rapidly evolving global communication environment... provides significant opportunities for representatives of the United States, regardless of their department or agency, to interact directly with key publics and increase global awareness and understanding of our values, policies, and activities.”26

An Expanded PA Role and Mission

Over the last decade, the Marine Corps has made several organizational changes in response to this new communication environment.27 Few, if any, have involved PA. In fact, attempts by the PA community to adapt to this new environment garnered little to no institutional support.28 Hence, PA remains largely postured for a world that no longer exists. It is time for change. This requires a new role for PA within the Corps. More specifically, it necessitates broadening PA’s mission beyond that of media relations when deployed.

When operating in the U.S. and on permanent installations abroad, Marine Corps PA is the Military Occupational Specialty (MOS) tasked with managing Marine Corps communication and engagement efforts.29 While the PA mission has become largely synonymous with media
relations, extant joint and Marine PA doctrine make clear that PA Marines should serve as more than mere spokespersons and media managers. When stateside, PA is tasked with leading a comprehensive communication effort that also includes the functions of command information (communicating with Marines and sailors, their families, civilian employees, and retirees) and community engagement (building relationships with off-base communities and organizations).

However, the institutional expectation for PA when in the U.S. stands in stark contrast to the expectation when deployed. First, doctrine largely defines the deployed PA role in narrow terms: media relations. There is little mention of leveraging interpersonal communication (e.g., key leader engagement, public speaking) or other mediated means (e.g., social media, content creation). Second, PA doctrine frequently references communication with “the public”—an amorphous and ambiguous entity. Despite passing mention of “foreign” publics, doctrine typically implies that PA should be most concerned with the American public-at-large. Third, while doctrine states that PA “fulfills the internal information needs” of the deployed force, no further guidance is provided. Finally, when the doctrine discusses community engagement, it focuses on PA garrison efforts—except for one vague statement saying that all “community engagement activities should support the overall [civil military operations (CMO)] plan.”

Regarding engagement with local populations when deployed, PA doctrine offers no explicit guidance, leaving uncertain whether PA should conduct engagement at all. Additionally, the doctrine states that “relationships with local populations in each [area of operations] are a civil affairs function, not a PA function.” The doctrine further notes that since “PA elements have the responsibility of working with media outlets...they will assist CMO elements in passing civil affairs information to the public through the appropriate media outlets.” This implies that when deployed, PA community engagement activities are in fact media relations activities. This
sentiment also is expressed when the doctrine references PA’s relationship with military information support operations (MISO). The clear implication is that, outside of press relations, PA need not help develop nor facilitate engagement strategies or other communication efforts with host-nation leaders or the local population. Ironically, PA is encouraged to think broadly about communication when in garrison, but narrowly when deployed.

The above discussion raises an even more important—and basic—question: what should be PA’s role in the Marine Corps? Should it just be to “tell the Marine Corps story,” or should it be something more? This question reflects a decades-old debate in academia and the corporate world about the purpose of organizational communication. Two models dominate public relations (PR) theory and practice: the “interpretive” and the “strategic management” paradigms.

In the traditional “interpretive paradigm,” organizations employ PR as a publicity and media relations function that disseminates information (i.e., one-way communication) to influence “audiences” on issues important to the organization. By “crafting” messages and planning information campaigns, PR practitioners seek to gain public support for the organization’s interests and build a positive reputation for the organization. Since this paradigm emphasizes the importance of “messaging” rather than concerns about the impact of the organization’s actions on key publics, PR practitioners have little need to participate in organizational decision-making. They merely communicate decisions after others make them.

In contrast, the “strategic management paradigm” employs PR as a relationship-building function that manages conflict for an organization by helping it reconcile its goals with the expectations of key publics. It uses dialogue (i.e., two-way communication) to listen and build understanding with the publics who can affect or be affected by the organization’s actions. PR practitioners participate in organizational decision-making by bringing knowledge of the external
environment into organizational policy-making and planning; they advise leadership about the
public opinion implications of actions and help the organization and its publics adjust to one
another. They also direct long-term communication planning in support of organizational goals.
In these organizations, PR practitioners help the organization gain a good reputation, credibility
and trust with publics through its behavior, not its publicity.

U.S. government and DoD efforts over the last decade to institutionalize “strategic
communication” (SC) illustrate a desire to shift to the strategic management paradigm. Citing
the growing importance of public support in achieving military objectives, DoD reports and
studies have lamented the U.S’ inability to communicate credibly with global publics in a new
interactive and interdependent communication environment.41 DoD’s proposed solution was the
adoption of SC: a “process of integrating issues of audience and stakeholder perception into
policy-making, planning, and operations at every level.”42 SC calls for the alignment of the
military’s actions and words to build credibility. It demands that DoD “learn, engage and listen;
try to understand how people outside the [U.S.] view U.S. actors; to think in advance about how
what we do and say will be perceived, and plan activities accordingly... [and to] recognize that
sometimes we’re going to make people angry, but try not to piss people off by accident.”43

The road to SC within DoD has been a bumpy one. While many understood the concept,
others misunderstood it as: 1) “messaging on steroids,” 2) a silver bullet for all of the military’s
ills (“just sprinkle some SC on that problem”), 3) a synonym for the current practice of PA, or
4) something only done at the “strategic” level. For others, both the growing popularity of SC
and the creation of new SC staffs were viewed as evidence that commanders wanted “to move
beyond” PA’s media-centric focus and “put communication at the forefront of planning.”44
Unfortunately, the military “solved” this planning shortfall solely by creating new SC staffs
rather than building planning capability and capacity within existing PA sections. This limited approach was predicated on the belief that because SC had “more to do with ‘strategy’ than with ‘communications,’” PA personnel could neither lead nor co-lead SC efforts. While SC is about strategy making, that fact should not exclude PA from a significant role in such a process. To adhere to a narrow view of PA’s role demonstrates a lack of knowledge about the decades-old strategic management paradigm and its practice by many civilian PR practitioners in corporate America. The military missed an opportunity to solve the true problem: the need to institutionally transition PA’s role from the interpretive to the strategic management paradigm. However, that the military went looking elsewhere for a solution is understandable; PA lacks a planning culture and personnel who are well trained in military and communication-specific planning processes.

As the Marine Corps faces a more demanding communication world amid decreasing resources, it cannot rely on current communication practices. New challenges, combined with timeless ones, demand that the Corps embrace a new role and broader mission for PA. By developing PA’s ability to execute the strategic management paradigm, the Corps leverages PA’s full potential and fills current capability gaps in research, planning, and evaluation. Decades of academic research have demonstrated this paradigm’s value to organizations. Also, by broadening PA’s deployed mission, the Corps allows a more flexible, comprehensive approach to communication. Rather than having PA default to media relations or primarily focus on U.S. publics, PA’s mission should be dictated by the unit’s requirements, communication manpower, as well as task prioritization and allocation. While developing an enhanced PA capability will take patience—and require major changes to how the Corps mans, trains, and equips PA—success requires it. And because an increase in communication force structure is unlikely, the
Corps must find new ways to maximize the limited manpower of PA, IO, MISO within current law. An additional step is also needed to enhance PA capability—the adoption of a new communication model.

**A More Realistic Communication Model**

PA doctrine's conceptualization of human communication is too simplistic and therefore insufficient for today's interactive world. It is based on the Source-Message-Channel-Receiver (SMCR) model (also called the "message influence model"); it views human communication as similar to that of a telephone system: a linear and unidirectional process of message transmission between a sender and receiver. The SMCR model uses an information source (i.e., the sender) that takes an idea and transposes it into words. This encoding process results in a message that is transmitted via a channel to be delivered and decoded by a receiver. Communication failure is always attributed to some sort of transmission failure. And, because accurate transmission can fail due to things like "noise," communicator skill or bias, this model asserts that messages should be few, simple, and repeated often. Hence, message centralization and control are key.

The message-centric approach advocated by the SMCR model remains the dominant approach within the U.S. government and the Marine Corps. Unfortunately, the model's core assumption—that effective communication can be achieved by repeatedly sending a correct and consistent message—is flawed. Current research and experience show that what is received is not necessarily the intended message. Variables such as a receiver's life experience, needs, cognitive biases, and culture "routinely and often unconsciously" influence what he hears, resulting in the receiver ascribing new meaning to the message sent. Thus, communication is not a process of simply transferring meaning but a process of making meaning. For example, the
The pragmatic complexity model (PCOM) describes communication as a “meaning-making process” influenced by both the persons involved and the larger social systems of which they are a part. PCOM accepts that the meaning of “freedom” will be understood differently by different systems. The model also regards communication as an integral component of an interactively complex system in which “participants interpret one-another’s actions and make attributions about the thoughts, motivations, intentions, etc., behind them.” Due to a concept called “double contingency,” the mere act of sending and receiving messages becomes a complex endeavor and just the beginning of the communication process. Using a simple example involving participants A and B, double contingency can be described this way:

- The success of A’s behavior depends not only on external conditions, but on what B does and thinks.
- What B does and thinks is influenced by A’s behavior as well as B’s expectations, interpretations, and attributions with respect to A.

Moreover:

A and B are locked in a relationship of simultaneous, mutual interdependence.... The communication process is not completely under the control of either A or B. What they do matters, of course. But so does the action of the system as a whole, and it is in an important sense independent of the actions of the individual participants. The system is not necessarily under anyone’s control. One implication is that the system has effects of its own that can thwart the best intentions of its members. Even if a message is clearly sent and correctly decoded and received, it might still not create the desired interpretations and attributions.

Yet, it is not possible to execute a communication strategy without messages. Fortunately, the PCOM model does not wholly reject the message influence model. Rather, PCOM calls for a “21st century realism about what is actually happening in the [communication] process.” It calls for exploring new ways of thinking about successful communication with
publics. It requires: 1) viewing communication as a process of dialogue, not transmission; 2) gaining an understanding of the systems with which one is trying to communicate; 3) accepting that control is impossible in a complex communication system; 4) embracing the chaos and complexity of today's communication landscape; and 5) adopting experimentation and variation in communication efforts rather than strict adherence to and repetition of messages. Thus, PA must adopt a new process and organization by which to conduct communication.

A New Communication Process and Organization

While both joint and Marine Corps doctrine refer to a PA "planning process," neither publication offers definition or procedural guidance. As a result, PA largely focuses its personnel and attention on the execution—not planning—of communication. However, a communication process taught in academia and used in the corporate world provides a solid framework for a military communication process. It involves four steps: 1) research and analysis, 2) plan development, 3) implementation, and 4) assessment and evaluation. These four steps align with the military's four-step operations process (i.e., planning, preparation, execution, assessment) and the six-step Marine Corps Planning Process (MCP), as shown below.

The first communication step, research and analysis, supports the planning step of the operations process, the creation of the Intelligence Preparation of the Environment (IPB), and the problem framing (PF) step of the MCP. Through primary and secondary research methods, PA Marines would build an understanding of the communication environment, key publics, and the military problem in order to inform both operational and communication-specific planning. In addition to conducting the staff actions required during the PF step, PA Marines would conduct three additional tasks. First, they would conduct a SWOT analysis, assessing the internal strengths and weaknesses of the military unit as well as the unit's external opportunities and
threats. Second, combined with their understanding of the environment and military problem, PA Marines would use this analysis to develop a communication-specific problem statement that nests with the military problem and informs PA plan development. Third, they would create a communication goal (i.e., a general outcome that is expected when the PA plan is completed) that solves the problem statement and supports the unit’s proposed mission statement.

The second communication step, plan development, supports the planning and preparation steps of the joint operations process, and the remaining five steps of the MCPP. As PA Marines contribute to the MCPP steps, they would concurrently develop a PA plan to support the unit’s proposed courses of action (COAs). This PA plan would be coordinated with other communication capabilities such as IO and MISO, and would be informed by research and communication theory. Also, this planning framework would require a change to the existing Annex F (Public Affairs) format. Currently, the annex serves not as a plan but rather as a means to pass administrative information about release authority, media ground rules, and required logistics support for embedded media.

The PA plan, in addition to the aforementioned problem and goal statements, would include six other components. First, Marines would identify, analyze, segment, and prioritize key publics that have a stake in the success or failure of the goal. Second, Marines would develop measurable objectives to achieve the stated goal. Third, Marines would develop an action strategy to achieve each stated objective. The action strategy would identify any steps needed for the military to ensure alignment between its actions and its words; if a “say-do” gap exists, PA Marines would notify military unit planners to resolve the misalignment. Fourth, Marines would develop a communication strategy for each stated objective that would identify 1) what messages would be communicated to what key publics (i.e., message content) and 2) the
best means for message delivery (i.e., face-to-face communication or mediated communication) to those key publics. Fifth, Marines would identify tactics, or detailed engagement methods (e.g., key leader engagement, blog post, press release), to support the communication strategies. These engagement efforts would move beyond one-way "messaging" and work to establish two-way dialogue with key publics; they also would proactively engage not just supporters but also those key publics with whom we disagree or have no established relationship. Lastly, Marines would create sub-plans to address possible or probable contingencies.

The third communication step, execution, coincides with the "execution" step of the military operations process. In this step, PA would execute the PA plan and quickly respond to misinformation, disinformation, emerging issues, and crises. This would require establishing staffing processes and streamlined authorities for initial quick information release, and prompt follow-up release of supporting evidence to buttress earlier communication. Also, the Marine Corps must seek and use new ways to communicate in the digital world. Rapidly changing communication technology has created both a necessity and opportunity for the Corps to create and share content directly with key publics through social media. Content—such as written products, videos, photos, multimedia products—should be easily shareable via social networks.

The last communication step, assessment and evaluation, is crucial not only to the success of PA efforts but also to overall organizational learning and flexibility. Assessments differ from evaluations in that they are continuous. By constantly gathering feedback, PA staffs would be able to adjust and adapt plans, programs, and activities in real-time. This facilitates the PCOM model's call for experimentation in communication efforts. In contrast, evaluations are the final judgments about a plan or program once complete; they serve to inform new plans and actions. Both assessment and evaluation would occur at three different stages of PA activity: 1)
preparation (assessment of the quality and adequacy of research and planning), 2) implementation (assessment of PA efforts and output; a.k.a. measures of performance), and 3) impact (assessment of the outcome of PA efforts; a.k.a. measures of effectiveness). Communication outcomes (i.e., results) often require time, and sometimes only can be measured qualitatively or via mixed-method approaches (e.g., quantitative and qualitative).

To facilitate this planning process, PA should organize its personnel around the four different communication planning steps (research and analysis, plan development, execution, and assessment and evaluation) rather than the three traditional PA functions (internal information, media relations, community engagement). This will prevent a singular focus on engagement at the expense of the other communication steps. Additionally, PA should centralize all engagement efforts under a single “engagement” section headed by one person. Organizing this way will encourage broader thinking about more effective ways to communicate with key publics, rather than defaulting to communication via the mass media.

Conclusion

In today’s interconnected world, military operations and activities have become the subject of increased public discourse and scrutiny by host-nation, international, and U.S. publics. With people across the globe now communicating, collaborating, and mobilizing at a speed and scale never seen before, the U.S. military must improve its ability to communicate credibly and build public support for military actions. This requirement means the Marine Corps must adopt a more comprehensive approach to communication; this, in turn, necessitates changes within PA. Today’s communication challenges cannot be successfully addressed unless the Marine Corps moves beyond the traditional media relations approach.
Several changes for PA have been outlined above. These include 1) adopting a new role for PA in the Marine Corps, 2) doctrinally defining a broader mission for PA when deployed, 3) embracing a new model for addressing contemporary communication challenges, and 4) establishing a PA planning process. Changes demand that PA also develop a closer working relationship with other communication capabilities such as IO, MISO, and CA, as well as all staff sections. Development of this new PA capability, however, will take time, demanding commitment and patience by Marine Corps leaders. And while outside the scope of this paper, other organizational challenges remain, such as the need for increased PA structure. However, the changes proposed in this paper to “modernize” PA capability represent an immediate step in the right direction.
ENDNOTES

1 IDF Spokesperson, Twitter post, November 14, 2012, 6:29am, https://twitter.com/IDFSpokesperson. The “#” symbol used before “Gaza Strip” and “Hamas” is called a hashtag. Twitter users place hashtags before keywords or topics in their tweets, making it easier for other users to search and find other tweets marked with the same keyword or topic.


3 Social media platforms included Twitter, YouTube, Facebook, Flickr, Tumblr, Pinterest, and the IDF Blog.

4 These IDF communication products can be accessed at: www.facebook.com/idfonline, www.flickr.com/photos/idfonline/8191892590/in/photostream, and www.youtube.com/watch?v=nTEDVC5ZqPA


9 This paper uses the term communication environment instead of the doctrinal term information environment. This change reflects a desire to emphasize the centrality of people and dialogue, not just information, to the communication process. For more information on the doctrinal definition of information environment, see pages 11-2 in Joint Publication 3-13, Information Operations.

10 In joint doctrine, the operational environment is comprised of adversarial, physical, informational, social, cultural, religious, and economic elements. For additional information, see Joint Publication 2-01.3, Joint Intelligence Preparation of the Operational Environment.


13 Ibid., 2, 11-13. The study defines the “battle for the narrative” as the competition between the US and its adversaries to gain popular support to advance the interests and objectives of each.


17 Public diplomacy (PD) is the U.S. “attempt to understand, inform and influence foreign publics in pursuit of our national interest and [to] broaden the dialogue between Americans, their institutions and counterparts abroad.” See Donna Marie Oglesby, “Public Diplomacy: Politics, Propaganda or Publicity,” (lecture, Tampa Bay Area Committee on Foreign Relations, Tampa, FL, March 21, 2006), https://ics-www.leeds.ac.uk/papers/vp01.cfm?outfit=pmt&folder=7&paper=2630 (December 10, 2012).
mediated communication means communication that is not face-to-face. Mediated communication occurs when some form of media—say a newspaper, a television, or the Internet—serves as an intermediary between two people.

For example, the PA field has been trying for more than a decade to reorganize its structure to better support the operating forces (OPFOR) and respond to changes in the communication environment. These efforts have included proposals to grow PA structure as well as no-growth proposals focused solely on reorganization. Reorganization proposals sought to “balance” PA structure between the supporting establishment (SE) and the OPFOR, since 70 percent of PA structure resides in the SE and only 30 percent resides in the OPFOR. Attempts to grow PA structure also were attempted, based on the analysis that PA’s current structure (93 funded officer billets and 402 funded enlisted billets) was insufficient to meet both commanders’ demands and the environment’s growing challenges. One growth proposal called for an additional 64 officer and 57 enlisted billets.

While some Marine organizations engage key publics independent of PA (e.g., the Office of Legislative Affairs, which leads Congressional outreach for the Marine Corps), these organizations are the exception and not the norm.


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While PR practitioners still use one-way communication methods, they are but one part of the organization's larger communication strategy.

To get a snapshot of the discussion, see the following Defense Science Board reports: Managed Information Dissemination, October 2001; Strategic Communication, September 2004; Strategic Communication, January 2008 at http://www.acq.osd.mil/dsb/reports2000s.htm.


This comment was made by a non-public affairs officer who was directly involved with strategic communication efforts within DoD. The comment was made in a private Facebook group for military communication, and reflects a sentiment that is prevalent among many public affairs officers in the Marine Corps, to include the author.


While there are PAOs who can and do participate in operational planning, there are many who do not for various reasons.

Research has found that in the civilian world, the strategic management paradigm helps an organization develop quality relationships, which “have both financial and nonfinancial value because they reduce the costs of regulation, legislation, and litigation; reduce the risk of implementing decisions; and sometimes increase revenue. They also have the secondary effects of improving the reputation of an organization...and reducing negative publicity because there are fewer bad behaviors for journalists to write about.” See James E. Grunig, “After 50 Years: The Value and Values of Public Relations,” (lecture, The Institute for Public Relations 45th Annual Distinguished Lecture, The Yale Club, New York, November 9, 2006), http://www.instituteforpr.org/topics/after-50-years/ (accessed December 3, 2012).

Just as it makes no sense in the 21st century to limit engagement with foreign publics to the State Department, truthful communication and engagement with foreign publics should not be limited to CA or MISO within DoD. To do so unnecessarily reduces the Marine Corps flexibility in its communication efforts. And while efficiencies and communication capacity may be gained by greater cooperation between PA, CA, and MISO, the author believes that existing numbers for Marine Corps PA personnel (93 funded officer billets and 402 funded enlisted billets) are insufficient to successfully meet the demands of today's communication environment.

By law, MISO cannot target U.S. citizens. For more information, see JP 3-13.2, Psychological Operations.

The SMCR model was developed by David Berlo in 1960 and was an extension of the sender-receiver communication model developed by Bell Labs engineer Claude Shannon in 1948. For more information about the SMCR model, see David K. Berlo, The Process of Communication (New York: Holt, Rinehart, & Winston, 1960).


Steven R. Corman, Angela Trethewey, and Bud Goodall, “A 21st Century Model for Communication in the Global War of Ideas: From Simplistic Influence to Pragmatic Complexity,” Consortium for Strategic
The PCOM model was developed by Steven Corman and his colleagues at the Center for Strategic Communication at Arizona State University. The center was previously known as the Consortium for Strategic Communication before its name change in November 2011. For more information, see: http://csc.asu.edu/about/.


To conduct this step, PA Marines may need to conduct or hire research firms to conduct primary research (e.g., a survey, an in-depth interview, a content analysis) to gain understanding of an issue. Yet, at other times, understanding can be increased by building relationships and improving information exchange with expert sources (e.g., DoD, interagency, coalition, and host-nation partners; local nationals; think tanks; academia) or by using the Internet to retrieve open source information (e.g., public opinion polls, published reports, media articles).

SWOT stands for strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and strengths.

Of course, any PA plan also will be coordinated with higher, adjacent and subordinate military units, as well as interagency, coalition partners, and host-nation partners as required.

Each objective would identify four things: 1) the key public on which the objective would focus, 2) the type of change desired of that public (e.g., knowledge, attitude, and/or behavior), 3) the magnitude of change desired (e.g., to increase, maintain, reduce, and by how much) and 4) the target date for the objective to be met.

See Cutlip, et al., 308-337, and Stacks, 4-30.

These new communication realities include: 1) mass media audiences that continue to shrink, 2) reduced coverage of the Marine Corps due to declining resources in mass media companies, and 3) decreased attention spans due to the fragmented and crowded media environment.

Of note, the research section would help PA staffs spot emerging problems and opportunities that could affect the unit’s mission. Through “environmental scanning,” PA staffs can recognize changes in the environment, identify misinformation and disinformation, and mitigate or solve issues before they worsen.

For example, there are only 93 funded officer billets and 402 funded enlisted billets in Marine Corps Public Affairs. This means that a Marine Expeditionary Force (MEF) only rates one officer and five enlisted Marines. Also, 28 percent of PA structure exists in the operating forces, with the other 72 percent existing in the supporting establishment.
BIBLIOGRAPHY


