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24 January 2019

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**Silence procedure Ends**  
**31 Jan 2019 – 17:30**

To: Permanent Representatives (Council)

From: Secretary General

**NATO MILITARY POLICY ON PUBLIC AFFAIRS**

1. With MC 0457/3 (enclosed), the NATO Military Policy on Public Affairs has been revised to integrate the NATO Military Policy on Strategic Communications, MC 0628. This revision is in line with the NATO Strategic Communications Policy agreed by Allies under PO(2009)0141.

2. I do not believe this issue requires discussion in Council. **Unless I hear to the contrary by 17:30 hours on Thursday, 31 January 2019**, I shall assume that the Council approves the NATO Military Policy on Public Affairs as set forth in MC 0457/3.

(Signed) Jens Stoltenberg

Enclosure

Original: English

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**NORTH ATLANTIC MILITARY COMMITTEE**  
COMITÉ MILITAIRE DE L'ATLANTIQUE NORD



11 December 2018

MC 0457/3 (Military Decision)

SECRETARY GENERAL, NORTH ATLANTIC TREATY ORGANIZATION

**MILITARY DECISION ON MC 0457/3**

**NATO MILITARY POLICY ON PUBLIC AFFAIRS**

1. On 6 Dec 18 the MC agreed MC 0457/3, attached at Enclosure 1. This Military Policy has been revised to integrate the NATO Military Policy on Strategic Communications MC 0628.
2. MC 0457/3 is forwarded to the NAC for their consideration and approval.
3. This document clears IMSWM-0338-2018, 19 Jul 18 and all SDs thereto.

**FOR THE MILITARY COMMITTEE:**

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to be 'J. Broeks', written over a light blue background.

Jan Broeks  
Lieutenant General, Royal Netherlands Army  
Director General  
International Military Staff

Enclosure:

1. MC 0457/3, NATO Military Policy on Public Affairs.

Copy to: IMS SDL Z, IS/PDD (StratCom), IMS/RECORDS.  
Action Officer: Mr Elvin, IMS/PASCAD (5983) (TTE 181586)

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**MC 0457/3**

**NATO MILITARY POLICY ON PUBLIC AFFAIRS**

## NATO MILITARY POLICY ON PUBLIC AFFAIRS

### References:

- A. MC 0628 (Final), NATO Military Policy on Strategic Communications, 26 Jul 17.
- B. MC 0402/2 (Final), NATO Military Policy on Psychological Operations, 3 Oct 12.
- C. MC 0422/5 (Final), NATO Military Policy for Information Operations, 11 Feb 15.

### GENERAL

1. The post-Cold War, post-9/11 era has been marked by NATO military operations of unprecedented scale, scope and complexity in locations far from the traditional Euro-Atlantic geographic area. In 1989, the Alliance counted 16 Nations as members; less than 30 years later, the number has increased to 29 Nations and NATO increasingly works with a growing numbers of Partners. In that same period, we have witnessed a burgeoning market for news in an ever more competitive media environment combined with new information technologies. The news cycle itself has changed, as well as the nature of news and those providing it. The result of these developments is that almost any aspect of NATO operations and issues can or will be reported to global audiences in near-real time. NATO adversaries also have similar access to all these technologies and use them to impart their own information and messages to try and sway publics and influence Alliance policy, perception and reputation.

2. National and international security issues now figure prominently on the domestic political and media scenes of most NATO Allies. Developments with respect to military operations or military forces undergoing transformation, often feature in coverage and can even define or shape national and international political discourse. Public expectations for more open and transparent organisations, including greater financial accountability and propriety of government spending, are elements to consider in communications efforts. All of these various factors regularly test the depth, breadth and flexibility of the Military Public Affairs (Mil PA) capability in NATO HQs and NATO Nations.

3. Since the second version of this policy was published in Feb 11, the political dynamic has evolved and the operational environment has changed. Public expectations regarding the timeliness, accuracy and type of information that should be available continue to grow steadily. If it is to remain relevant and effective, NATO needs to continuously adapt. Effective public affairs support to field and permanent HQ commanders is an integral part of that response and requires that the capability be properly resourced and fully integrated into the decision-making process for military operations, policy development, programme design and service delivery. This means the capability and capacity to manage and deliver Public Affairs (PA) is expected at all NATO military HQs.

4. Mil PA is part of the wider NATO Strategic Communications (StratCom) effort that aims to enhance coherence of all information and communication activities and

capabilities, both civilian and military<sup>1 2</sup>. NATO Military Policy on Strategic Communications (Reference A) ensures that the communication capabilities, Mil PA & Psychological Operations (PSYOPS), and the staff function of Information Operations (Info Ops), should be structurally grouped together within NATO military structures, missions and operations. This NATO MC policy is relevant to NATO Command Structure (NCS), NATO Force Structure (NFS) and NATO Missions and Operations and although does not constrain Nations, it promotes NATO's modus operandi for the specific discipline, among NATO members.

## **AIM**

5. To provide a policy for NATO military application of Public Affairs within the Alliance structure at all levels.

## **SCOPE**

6. This policy establishes direction with respect to NATO Mil PA for all personnel working under NATO's command. It also serves as guidance for all those in the NATO force structure or working in support of NATO Military Authorities. It specifically addresses the following aspects:

- a. Definition.
- b. Mil PA Functions and Principles.
- c. Responsibilities.
- d. Organisation.
- e. Relationships.
- f. The Military Public Affairs Working Group (Mil PA WG) at SC-Level.
- g. Key Tenets of Doctrine.
- h. Key Tenets of Process.
- i. Exercises and Training.
- j. Mil PA on Operations.

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<sup>1</sup> The NATO Strategic Communications Policy defines NATO StratCom as: the coordinated and appropriate use of NATO communications activities and capabilities - Public Diplomacy, Public Affairs, Military Public Affairs, Info Ops and PSYOPS - in support of Alliance policies, operations and activities, and in order to advance NATO's aims (PO(2009)0141, 29 Sep 09).

<sup>2</sup> Military Strategic Communications is the integration of communication capabilities and information staff function with other military activities, in order to understand and shape the Information Environment (IE), in support of NATO aims and objectives (Reference A).

## DEFINITION

7. NATO Mil PA is the capability responsible for promoting NATO's military aims and objectives by communicating accurate information in a timely manner to various audiences. This communication enhances awareness and understanding of the military aspects of the Alliance's role, aims, operations, missions, activities and issues, thereby reinforcing its organisational credibility. This includes planning and conducting the basic functions of Mil PA as defined in section 8. Mil PA will remain the lead function responsible for the External and Internal Communication as defined at Reference A. The Allied Command Operations and Allied Command Transformation Public Affairs Handbook provides guidance on extent capabilities to the Mil PA community.

## MIL PA FUNCTIONS AND PRINCIPLES

8. Functions. The basic functions of Mil PA are:

a. Media activities. Media activities are designed to provide information through all mass communication means to a wide variety of audiences. Commanders and staffs, through their Public Affairs Offices, should be prepared to respond to media inquiries; issue statements; conduct briefings and interviews; arrange for media access to permanent and operational units; and distribute information through traditional and digital media, as a means to develop relations with the purveyors and the consumers of news.

b. Digital Media. Digital media activities are designed to provide information directly to our key audiences and stakeholders through digital and social media channels. Digital media management is the process of harnessing and combining capabilities to achieve communication goals. Creating effective digital media products and delivering successful communications campaigns for NATO requires understanding of NATO's wider StratCom goals.

c. Outreach Activities. Outreach activities are aimed at fostering strategic relations with key external stakeholders who have an interest in military issues and activities, such as think-tanks, academia, military-related associations, and other key stakeholders. They are often invited to comment as unbiased Subject Matter Experts (SMEs) in the field of security and defence policy, and more specifically on NATO policy, decisions and actions, and can therefore provide a sustainable "force multiplier" effect.

d. Internal Communications. Internal communications efforts facilitate communication with and among NATO military and civilian personnel and their families. Its purpose is to inform about the command or HQ, its people and its activities, and is distinct from administrative information or direction from the Chain of Command that is normally found in administrative or routine orders. Effective programmes to keep internal audiences informed about significant developments that affect them and the work of their HQ create an awareness of the organisation's goals and activities; improves work quality; and makes command personnel more effective representatives of the organisation.

e. Community Relations. Community relations programmes are associated with the interaction between NATO military installations in NATO Nations and their surrounding civilian communities. These programmes address issues of interest to and foster relations with the general public.

f. Media Monitoring and Analysis. Media monitoring and analysis provides early warning and analysis of media reports in briefings to Senior Leadership; media environment analyses help prepare communications plans; and post-engagement feedback and evaluation. Media monitoring and analysis use both internal and external tools, as well as human analysis, to quantitatively and qualitatively understand the media space. Raw data is gathered to provide feedback on a weekly, monthly and quarterly basis as evaluation reports, as well as on an ad-hoc basis as required. The Media Monitoring and Analysis Section liaises closely with staff functions, such as StratCom, Info Ops and Intelligence, as well as higher and lower Commands.

9. Principles. The principles of NATO Mil PA, which are aligned to and expand upon the overarching StratCom principles (Reference A), are:

a. Tell and show the NATO story. All Mil PA activity is founded on NATO's values. Mil PA efforts support commanders and staff in the execution of their mission and are conducted in accordance with higher NATO political and military direction. Practitioners are first and foremost NATO Mil PA staff and they should develop and promulgate compelling narratives that support the Alliance's military aims and objectives in line with the Commander's priorities and respective of the StratCom framework.

b. Provide accurate information in a timely manner. This is critical to functional and organisational credibility and trust with publics, internal audiences and media, and helps deter adversary disinformation in a 24/7 media environment. The impact of Mil PA activity is often directly proportional to the timeliness and accuracy of the Mil PA effort or response: information delivered quickly by NATO representatives can have a qualitatively different effect than the same information delivered a day or even an hour later.

c. Ensure that information is consistent, co-ordinated and integrated with own and higher headquarters. One effect of the global Information Environment (IE) is that publics can receive information about military operations from all levels of command, including reports from theatre, from multiple sources. Communication is a collective and integrated effort. Words and actions must be aligned and commanders should ensure that their Mil PA operations disseminate a consistent message through NATO's many voices, and that military information activities<sup>3</sup> are well coordinated according to Reference A.

d. Practise appropriate operational security. The provisions of operational security and propriety must be considered and adhered to before releasing information. NATO staff work is often pre-decisional, therefore care in

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<sup>3</sup> Information activities are actions designed to affect information and/or information systems, performed by any actor and include protective measures (AJP 3.10).



addressing holding statements to support pre-decisional actions is critical to ensure messaging does not get ahead of NAC-level decisions. Protecting NATO against criticism or embarrassment is not a reason to classify or withhold information.

e. Conduct work mindful of multinational sensitivities, and respectful of the local and regional cultural environment. It is critical that the IE be understood wherever the Alliance is conducting its activities. NATO operations can be adversely affected by culturally inappropriate references or imagery. Conversely, the effect and impact of communications is made stronger when it is informed by an understanding and appreciation of local custom, tradition and culture, and a good appraisal of the IE monitored as part of Info Ops.

## RESPONSIBILITIES

10. Political Level. The NAC provides overall guidance and direction to NATO StratCom efforts, as well as mission-specific strategic and political guidance for NATO information activities. It keeps the implementation of the StratCom policy under active review. The SG provides specific direction and guidance on StratCom to all NATO civilian and military bodies and commands. The SG is the principal spokesperson for the Alliance. The Assistant Secretary General for Public Diplomacy (ASG/PDD) oversees the coordination of all StratCom activities across all NATO civilian and military bodies and commands, and also directs all Public Diplomacy activities except Press and Media. The NATO Spokesperson, on behalf of the SG, provides day-to-day direction of all headquarters media activities, including messaging, and offers guidance to Mil PA to ensure NATO messages and communications are consistent with political direction & guidance. The NATO StratCom Policy Board (SCPB), chaired by ASG/PDD, is the designated directing body for NATO StratCom.

11. The NATO MC. The MC establishes policy for NATO Mil PA. The Chairman of the MC (CMC) is the principal military spokesperson for the Alliance on all military issues. Other key responsibilities include:

- a. Agree and maintain an effective Mil PA policy and ensure Mil PA aspects are included in other MC policy documents.
- b. Provide military guidance for Mil PA including operations, exercises, capabilities and training.
- c. Promulgate, monitor, coordinate and contribute to the development of Mil PA doctrine via the MC Joint Standardisation Board.
- d. Develop, maintain and disseminate information essential for the identification and protection of critical NATO information by appropriate organisations.
- e. Develop and maintain Mil PA related Crisis Response Measures.

12. International Military Staff (IMS). The IMS's Public Affairs and StratCom Advisor (PASCAD) supports IMS PA requirements, contributes to the fulfilment of the

IMS's role by advising the CMC on Mil PA matters and StratCom issues. PASCAD is the MC's spokesperson, and facilitates interaction and coordination between the two Strategic Commands, the MC and IS/PDD on Mil PA matters. The IMS PASCAD is also the principal contact within the IMS for StratCom issues, and represents the Director General of the IMS, in his/her absence, at all StratCom meetings and specifically on the SCPB. The PASCAD also chairs the Military Committee Working Group for Strategic Communications (MCWG(STRATCOM)). He/she liaises with and provides guidance on all questions of military relevance to IS/PDD.

13. Strategic Commands. In accordance with the NATO HQ's guidance, the Strategic Commanders provide overall guidance and direction to Mil PA within their respective areas of responsibility. SACEUR is the principal military spokesperson for NATO operations. SACT is the principal military spokesperson for NATO warfare development.

a. As a part of the Communications Division, the Chief Public Affairs Officer (CPAO) SHAPE directs, plans, and executes strategic level Mil PA for Allied Command Operations (ACO) in support of NATO operations or other activities under SACEUR's direction and responsibility.

b. The CPAO for ACT directs, plans and executes strategic level Mil PA in support of NATO transformation activities under SACT's direction and responsibility. The CPAO ACT is also responsible for NATO-related training and doctrinal aspects of NATO Mil PA, consulting with NATO HQ and ACO.

14. Subordinate Commands. As a part of a Communications Directorate (or similar staff element)<sup>4</sup> CPAOs for operational and tactical-level Commands and organisations subordinate to ACO and ACT are responsible to their respective Commanders for all Mil PA programming and activities of their HQ.

15. Elements of the Force Structure and Subordinate Agencies, Bodies, and Committees. The NFS consists of forces placed at the Alliance's disposal by the member nations, temporarily or permanently, including the associated command and control elements. These can be part of NATO's multinational forces or be additional national contributions to NATO. Both NATO and elements of the NFS benefit from being publicly affiliated with each other. As such, when an issue or activity could become public and affect each other's reputation, liaison between Mil PA offices should occur ahead of time.

16. Others. Other organisations, committees and sub-committees that are the responsibility of the MC (such as the NATO Defense College), SACEUR (such as the high readiness land and maritime forces) and SACT (such as the Training Centres<sup>5</sup>) are responsible for delivering their own PA programming. They will seek functional PA guidance from the IMS PASCAD, ACO CPAO, or ACT CPAO respectively.

17. NATO Nations. NATO Nations have primary responsibility to inform publics

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<sup>4</sup> The term directorate used at SHAPE may not be used at a lower level where other name are used pending specificities of the HQ.

<sup>5</sup> Joint Warfare Centre, Joint Force Training Centre, Joint Analysis and Lessons Learned Centre (JALLC) Reference A.

within their own country about decisions taken in the framework of their Alliance membership, including participation in Alliance operations and activities. They should provide messages in accordance with the NATO narrative and Alliance's story. Nations provide trained and qualified PAOs for national requirements and to fill positions in NATO's permanent headquarters, operations and other activities as required and within capabilities and priorities.

## ORGANISATION

18. Structure. NATO Mil PA is a command responsibility at all levels, and is part of the communications directorate or similar staff element, retaining the functional responsibilities for PA. All NATO military headquarters and command elements are to have a Mil PA capability. The CPAO/Spokesperson holds an independent advisory role and direct access to the Commander on Mil PA matters, as well as responsibilities for engagement with the media. These responsibilities cannot be further delegated or subordinated to other functions. Practitioners are responsive to guidance from the Mil PA function at higher HQs.

19. Resourcing. All NATO HQs are required to have a Mil PA capability, but personnel and financial requirements will vary. The Mil PA capability needs to be sufficiently staffed with trained and experienced personnel and resourced to meet the operational and routine tasking tempo of the headquarters and its activities. The minimum capability requirement includes plans and policies, media operations, media monitoring and analysis, and production (writing, imagery, and digital media management). They should benefit of the productions collected as part of the IE assessment.

20. Training. Operating successfully in today's complex operational and media environment requires that Mil PA personnel be trained and skilled in all aspects of Mil PA work at the strategic, operational and tactical levels. NATO Nations are encouraged to develop national Mil PA capability and to recruit, educate, train, employ and promote within the profession in order to build the experienced capability required for this specialised discipline. Training should recognise the high potential for employment on operations in a joint multinational environment. At the same time, shortfalls should be constantly monitored in NATO HQs and in operational theatres, both in quality and quantity.

## RELATIONSHIPS

21. PA Relationship to StratCom. The Communications Directorate (or similar staff element) will direct, coordinate and synchronise the overall StratCom effort and will ensure coherence across the communication capabilities and information staff function. The CPAO supports the Commander's StratCom process by ensuring that Mil PA actions, plans and objectives are coordinated as part of the broader StratCom effort. The Communications Directorate (or similar staff element)<sup>6</sup> structure does not alter the direct link of the Spokesperson or the CPAO to the Commander, nor modify the inter-relationships between the different information disciplines, as defined in the

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<sup>6</sup> The term directorate used at SHAPE may not be used at a lower level where other name are used pending specificities of the HQ in terms of size or type of employment.

NATO StratCom Policy (Reference A) and the respective MC policies governing PSYOPS (Reference B) and Info Ops (Reference C).

22. PA Relationship to the Information Staff Function and the other Communication Capability. Info Ops as part of the communications directorate (or similar staff element) are a staff function to analyse the IE, plan, synchronise and assess information activities to create desired effect on the will, understanding and capability of adversaries, enemies and other NAC-approved audiences in support of Alliance missions objectives. Analysis of the IE includes adversary messaging and actions as part of the overarching StratCom effort. While coordination is essential, Mil PA and Info Ops are separate, but related functions, with separate lines of authority. In order to maintain credibility, the Chief StratCom/Director of Communications (or similar title) is to ensure Mil PA will have no role in planning or executing PSYOPS or deception operations. This does not prohibit the coordination and deconfliction of all communications activities by StratCom staff. This coordination and de-confliction is essential in maintaining the integrity and consistency of Alliance narratives and messages.

#### **THE MILITARY PUBLIC AFFAIRS WORKING GROUP (MIL PA WG)**

23. The Mil PA WG is established, at SC-level, as a direct information link between the Mil PA offices in NATO HQs and NATO capitals, with Terms of Reference (Annex A). The Mil PA WG serves as a two-way tool for exchanging valuable information on PA issues, training opportunities and other NATO-related issues including recommendations on policy and doctrine adaptations.

#### **KEY TENETS OF DOCTRINE**

24. Mil PA Approaches. It is NATO policy to release timely, accurate information that is consistent with operational security and propriety. The Mil PA approach for each activity or situation needs to be assessed on a case-by-case basis, being attentive to the public and external/internal audience interest, and is informed by Mil PA considerations of best issue management and security.

25. A Mil PA approach provides a guide respecting the Level of Ambition or expectations of the desired profile for an activity, event or issue. Given that everything NATO does or does not do is subject to public scrutiny, this characterisation of "intent of effort" helps prioritise work and assign resources, although staff must remain flexible as the facts that informed the original assessment can change. The Mil PA approach with respect to external and internal audiences is not necessarily identical for the same issue. NATO defines three Mil PA approaches:

- a. Very Active. Significant and deliberate effort will be invested to promote awareness, visibility and to provide context to the narrative/storyline. This approach is called for where real public interest is anticipated or desired.
- b. Active. Routine effort will be invested to promote public awareness. This approach may be used when the activity is expected to have some audience interest, or where the Mil PA return on investment given the time and resources expended is expected to be modest.

c. Reactive. A reactive approach could be used when little to no public interest is anticipated; where operational security, policy, privacy, propriety, or higher guidance indicates that an active or proactive approach is not appropriate; or when full disclosure is not yet possible, for instance based on pre-decisional topics. A Mil PA plan and media lines should be developed in anticipation of media or public queries. As such, being Reactive still means being responsive to queries.

26. The Spokesperson. Since the Commander is likely to be seen as the most credible spokesperson for his/her mission or headquarters, he/she will often speak publicly, and should therefore seek and receive the advice and support of the CPAO, specifically in preparation for media interviews or public engagements. Even if only an official spokesperson should be quoted as such, any uniformed member of NATO regardless of rank or position, who responds to media or speaks publicly about an issue, will be perceived as “a NATO military official or spokesperson”, regardless of whether that is technically the case or not. This reality calls for clear and advance understanding as to who is authorised to speak to media or the general public on behalf of the organisation and its commander, and a basic level of media awareness training for all NATO personnel. As a minimum, they should seek the CPAO’s advice. All NATO military HQs will identify someone, be it an individual or through appointment, as the public face of the organisation<sup>7</sup>. Having stated the above principles, as any member of the organisation may face the possibility to interact with media suddenly and unexpectedly, it is the CPAO’s responsibility to ensure that his/her command, personnel are properly informed of the procedure on media interaction, as well as aware of the command mission and basic narrative elements.

## KEY TENETS OF PROCESS

27. Classification of Information. Almost all NATO documents and information are by nature classified, and thus PAOs face daily decisions with respect to what can or cannot be released to the public. Obtaining formal authority from the originator to release classified information can be an unwieldy and lengthy process, even though all or part of the information may already be publicly available. Restrictive classification of information can also limit the institution’s ability to quickly but accurately respond to queries or to proactively engage audiences in the interests of managing issues, negatively impacting the organisation’s reputation. As such, NATO military PAOs need to be thoroughly familiar with NATO policies with respect to the classification and management of information so as to make informed and considered judgements regarding suitability for release. If in doubt, Command and higher functional Mil PA guidance should be sought. NATO Nations can support this effort by declassifying relevant information and intelligence for PA purpose, including imagery from weapons sensors.

28. Release Authority. Release authority is an integral part of Mil PA planning and it is imperative that the CPAO defines who has the authority to release information and

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<sup>7</sup> Organisations that belong to the NFS are not in the NCS. Unless involved in a NATO operation, personnel belonging to the NFS should not be identified as NATO spokespersons. Rather, they speak only for their own organisation, although they are welcome to explain the nature of the affiliation with NATO.

what coordination is required (release authority matrix) well in advance of any potential incident. Normally, the CPAO is the sole authority to release information (including imagery such as still, video and graphics) to the general public, but there may be some types of information, e.g. Commanders Critical Information Requirements, where the Commander, Deputy Commander or Chief of Staff may restrict release. Furthermore, coordination with the other key stakeholders such as the StratCom Director (or similar title), Legal Advisor, Security Advisor or higher Headquarters may result in additional limitations.

29. PA Products. PAOs must advise commanders on the best communication options to use, and also maximise various technologies, social media platforms and training to derive the greatest effect when communicating actions and intent. Coordination between commands and departments will help determine the content that needs to be created for each event or situation, and will help facilitate completion of these projects through appropriate resource allocation and by eliminating duplication of effort. All NATO Mil PA products will adhere to the NATO Brand Guide and NATO Visual Identity Guidelines, as determined and issued by IS/PDD.

a. Public and Media Queries. All media queries will be directed to a PAO within that HQ or unit so that interest in the activity or issue can be tracked, assessed and dealt with in an appropriate fashion.

b. Media Interviews. All interviews between external media outlets and personnel assigned to permanent and deployed NATO HQs require that the organisation's PAO be made aware beforehand; the PAO will evaluate the request and recommend a course of action. Chain of Command or the Commander's approval may be required if the subject is of a sensitive nature. The interview should be monitored by a PAO in attendance.

c. Public Speaking and Writing. Explaining NATO to interested audiences by members of the organisation is to be encouraged. Any person working for, or on behalf of, NATO military forces who speaks in an organised setting to external audiences or intends on publishing his/her writing about a NATO-related topic in the public domain is to seek advice from that organisation's Mil PA staff, who will advise on whether prior approval from the member's Chain of Command should be sought. Academic works are subject to separate guidelines and advice should be sought prior to releasing such works<sup>8</sup>.

d. PA Guidance. CPAOs may develop and promulgate Public Affairs Guidance (PAG) to address issues not described or forecast in existing operation plans or strategies. Usually, PAGs will recommend the approach, summarise the issue, identify the lead organisation(s), identify spokespersons, list messages, and provide co-ordinating instructions.

e. Imagery. The increasing dominance of visual media, particularly in light of the digital media environment and changing consumer news habits, means that NATO cannot effectively tell its story without imagery (still, and video plus

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<sup>8</sup> Academic works need to include a disclaimer on the cover page stating that: "The views expressed herein are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the official views of NATO."

sound). This can take the form of NATO providing imagery itself, or by facilitating media access to NATO people and activities. All Mil PA activities should therefore consider ways and means to collect, properly identify and distribute imagery. NATO Nations that do not already have a deployable military imagery gathering capability are encouraged to develop one. In addition to supporting national Mil PA objectives, proactively sharing imagery with higher NATO Headquarters will help leverage its overall impact with regional and international audiences, an effect that may be difficult for any one nation to obtain. NATO encourages Nations, within the national OPSEC rules and priorities, to implement policies for the rapid identification and declassification of such imagery in order to make it available to support Mil PA efforts.

f. Digital Media Management. Digital media is a robust and essential part of NATO's ability to directly and effectively communicate in a conversational and visual way with audiences. Digital media management is the process of harnessing and combining capabilities to achieve communication goals in line with the Commander's intent. NATO strives to interact with a variety of audiences, each with different interests, levels of understanding and technological capabilities. Communicating effectively with these audiences, means being present on all media platforms where these audiences gather information in order to promote understanding and support for NATO. Information should be current, easily navigable, interactive, and in accordance with NATO visual guidelines. Furthermore, building effective digital media products and campaigns necessitates full understanding, utilisation and blending of technological advances. Local directives respecting Mil PA involvement in Command/HQ Intranet sites may be issued.

g. Media Monitoring and Analysis. The role of information, either provided or denied, is an important consideration in military planning and operations. Throughout the history of warfare, militaries have sought advantage through actions intended to affect the perception and behaviour of adversaries. With the advent of the internet, the expansion of information technology, the widespread availability of wireless communications, and the far-reaching impact of social media, today's information environment poses new and complex challenges for military operations. This networked environment has enabled both state and non-state actors to employ activities in the IE to achieve their objectives effectively. With a better understanding of the information environment and the use of integrated communications plans, there are several key products Mil PA can provide to Senior Leadership and staff, such as News Reviews, Periodic Analysis Products (i.e. Morning Update Briefings, Quarterly Assessments, Event Feedback) and Analysis Products on demand (i.e. Media Environment Assessment, Country Media Reviews).

30. NATO Nations are encouraged to communicate with friends, family and colleagues, and may share experiences with the broader public, provided they adhere to the provisions of security and propriety together with any national regulations. The Chain of Command has expert advisors, including Mil PA staff, who will ensure that such published information is not ultimately prejudicial to NATO operations and personnel.

31. PA Strategies and Plans. PA Strategies and Plans should be developed in support of organisational objectives, consistent with the StratCom guidance for the HQ, command or operation, and at the earliest possible stages working within the coordinating direction and guidance of the Director of Communications (or similar title). Plans should clearly identify key themes, messages, SMART objectives<sup>9</sup>, responsibilities and resources required. Furthermore, Mil PA activities should be regularly evaluated for effectiveness, reporting status to the higher echelon and adjusted as required to meet evolving circumstances.

## **EXERCISES AND TRAINING**

32. Numerous NATO exercises and training events are conducted every year providing an opportunity to communicate the NATO values. Such exercises are listed annually in an MC-approved programme. Additionally, there are nationally sponsored exercises to which NATO and Partner Nations are invited to participate, and these are the sole responsibility of the sponsor nation. Both the NATO military HQ that is scheduling the NATO exercise and the Officer Conducting the Exercise (OCE) need to give early consideration to the public affairs value and/or the necessity of informing publics about it. Exercise plans should include the results of such considerations as per Para 29 of this document. Often, media will be aware of the fact that an exercise is being planned well before any formal acknowledgement of it by NATO. Given the long lead time to prepare logistics support and in some cases a need to conduct community relations activities to sensitise populations to the fact that NATO forces will be exercising in the area, Mil PA engagement and support from the outset is required.

## **MILITARY PUBLIC AFFAIRS ON OPERATIONS**

33. Media Integration. NATO Nations should encourage media access to Alliance operations and other NATO activities, including hosting accredited media representatives at field headquarters or units. Media can be represented by accredited journalists (Article 79, Additional Protocol I, 1977), war correspondents (Article 4, Geneva Protocol III, 1949), or freelance journalists. As Mil PA is a Command responsibility, the decision to host media in NATO HQs or units on operations is at the discretion of the affected HQ Commander, in accordance with direction from theatre HQ and/or the policies established by the ACO HQ. NATO Nations that individually establish media embedding programmes are encouraged to ensure that media representatives are offered the opportunity to meet with and be briefed by senior NATO officers or officials prior to being embedded. Ground rules respecting operational security and privacy are operation or activity-specific, and are the responsibility of ACO.

34. Media Information Centres. All NATO-led military operations or other activities involving a major deployment of forces (including major training exercises) will establish a facility in theatre, which will normally take the form of a NATO Media Information Centre (NMIC) in a location and facility as accessible to the news media as security conditions allow. Media have a right to be in theatre and to cover NATO activities.

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<sup>9</sup> SMART stands for Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic and Time-bound.



35. Accreditation and Registration of Media. The NATO IS/PDD is responsible for verifying permanently accredited journalists to NATO HQ. To manage access to NATO media information centres, facilities, properties and people, NATO Mil PA staff will register media in close coordination with the Host Nation. Media representatives hosted by NATO will sign a waiver of liability exempting the nation and organisation from any claims that might arise as a result of any injuries, harm or damage.

36. Significant Incidents. Significant incidents including casualties, accidents and damage to property or equipment involving NATO forces will quickly generate media and public interest and will be publicly acknowledged at the lowest appropriate level in the NATO Chain of Command. Such announcements will be made in close coordination with the Nations and organisations involved. NATO Nations, as well as organisations working closely with Alliance forces, retain the prerogative to release specific details about incidents involving their personnel, property or equipment, including the names of those killed or injured; the details of damaged property or equipment; and the status of investigations or medical treatment.

a. Casualties. Where military casualties are incurred during an ongoing operation, relevant and verified information will be disseminated by NATO Mil PA to the media in a timely fashion, while respecting the prerogative of Troop Contributing Nations (TCN) to confirm the nationality and nature of casualties and the detailed circumstances of the event. This requires speedy and proactive coordination to ensure message consistency amongst NATO and national PA communications, especially in the event of multiple investigations.

b. Release of names, nationalities and personal details of service members who die or are seriously injured is a national responsibility.

c. The NATO CPAO in theatre will ensure close coordination with respective senior in-theatre national military representatives. Coordinating with TCN's delegations and PA authorities in national capitals will normally be led by the Press and Media Section of the IS/PDD at NATO HQ in conjunction with IMS PASCAD. Coordinating procedures for announcing NATO civilian casualties will also be led by the Press and Media Section of the IS/PDD on behalf of the SG.

Annexes:

- A. Terms of Reference for the Military Public Affairs Working Group at SC-Level.
- B. Lexicon of Terms.

## **TERMS OF REFERENCE FOR THE MILITARY PUBLIC AFFAIRS WORKING GROUP AT SC-LEVEL**

### **INTRODUCTION**

1. In an evolving security environment, the area of Public Affairs (PA) requires ongoing re-examination. Policies, directives, doctrine and guidance require coordination within the Alliance.

### **AIM**

2. The aim of the Military Public Affairs Working Group (Mil PA WG) is to ensure the Alliance maintains effective PA by:

- a. Providing military advice to the MC on PA related issues.
- b. Reviewing and recommending changes to NATO military policy on PA.
- c. Developing, reviewing/refining and approving PA doctrine ensuring co-ordination with other members of the community of communicators.
- d. Considering PA requirements for activities, operations and exercises/training.
- e. Applying Lessons Learned.

### **MEETING, RECORDS AND COMPOSITION**

3. The MCWG(StratCom) remains the authority for Mil PA and other related policies. To assist in this responsibility and ensure harmonisation with StratCom policy, Mil PA shall form an individual working group, at SC-level, that reports to the MCWG(StratCom) on its discussions. The chairmanship for the Mil PA WG will rest within the Bi-SC. The Mil PA WG Chairperson will be a standing member of the MCWG(StratCom). The MCWG(StratCom) Chairperson (i.e. IMS PASCAD) and the ACO/ACT representatives of the MCWG(StratCom) will be standing members of the Mil PA WG. The NATO Spokesperson or his/her designated representative will be invited to attend on a non-voting basis.

4. The Mil PA WG will be co-chaired by ACO/ACT CPAOs. ACO PA and ACT PA are responsible for providing a secretary for each meeting on a rotational basis.

5. The WG will hold formal scheduled meetings twice annually. One meeting will normally coincide with the annual NATO Information and Communicators Conference (NICC). Other meetings may be scheduled, as the WG deems necessary, to carry out its responsibilities.

6. The Chairpersons will issue a proposed agenda for each meeting. The Mil PA WG members and national representatives may propose items for discussion as additions to this agenda. The Chairpersons will ensure that the summary record of

each meeting, including decisions taken and actions pending, is prepared and distributed to all members and participants. Members and national representatives are responsible for informing their respective chains of command.

7. The Mil PA WG membership consists of one representative from each of the NATO signatory nations, the chairperson of the MCWG(StratCom), ACT and ACO representatives as well as other NATO organisations as appropriate. The national representative is normally the senior national PA representative. Observers from non-NATO partners and Troop Contributing Nations (TCN) may be invited to attend on a case-by-case basis.

8. Members representing NATO HQ, IMS, ACT<sup>10</sup>, ACO<sup>11</sup> and other NATO bodies and non-NATO Nations do not have a vote in proceedings nor the power of reservation. They do have an acknowledged right to express views in proceedings and have such views recorded if they so desire. National representatives are the voting members of the WG. WG members should come to meetings fully briefed and prepared to present their Nations' or their headquarters' views. They are expected to participate in discussions on proposals with a view to reaching agreement. Final acceptance of agreed proposals will be obtained through the normal staffing process.

## TASKS

9. The Mil PA WG is to:

- a. Advise on all aspects of Alliance Mil PA as requested by NATO Nations.
- b. Support the MC in the development of military advice for PA.
- c. Examine and recommend resource requirements for PA.
- d. Adopt and review Terms of Reference for the WG.
- e. Coordinate NATO Mil PA policy and doctrine in accordance with other NATO policies and doctrines.
- f. Review and make recommendations for updating and revising all NATO and ACT/ACO Mil PA policies, directives, doctrines and procedures.
- g. Ensure that Nations and Commands are kept informed of all developments and that their concerns are adequately addressed in the deliberations of the WG.
- h. Discuss PA requirements and make proposals for force standards and capabilities.
- i. Initiate requests for research and development for the improvement of

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<sup>10</sup> To include Joint Warfare Centre, Joint Force Training Centre and Joint Analysis and Lessons Learned Centre.

<sup>11</sup> JFCs, Single Service Commands/Component Commands, Named Ops, Section heads of SHAPE Mil PA.

PA-related techniques and tools, including methodologies, planning and assessment.

- j. Provide a forum for the discussion and fulfilment of PA requirements for both operations and exercises/training.
- k. Develop, coordinate and promote NATO PA training standards.

**LEXICON OF TERMS**

Information Activities (IA): Actions designed to affect information environment and/or information systems. They can be performed by any actor and include protection measures.

Information Environment (IE): IE is comprised of the information itself, the individuals, organisations and systems that receive, process and convey the information, and the cognitive, virtual and physical space in which this occurs.

Information systems: An assembly of equipment, methods and procedures and, if necessary, personnel, organised to accomplish information processing functions.

Message: Any thought or idea expressed briefly in plain, coded, or secret language, prepared in a suitable form for transmission by any means of communication. It supports a specific theme and is tailored to a specific audience.

Messaging: The transfer of any thought or idea from one person or device to another, by using any medium of communication.

Narrative and/or StratCom core message: A brief Narrative Statement as a result of a systematic assessment of the IE. Or if no Narrative could be agreed, a brief core message to underpin the StratCom approach to be adopted.

Theme: The unifying subject or idea that guides message development by communications functions in support of a Narrative in achieving the StratCom objectives/effects.

