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Personnel—General

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1. WHAT IS PUBLIC AFFAIRS?

“No organization so directly concerned with the public interest can hope to escape the effects of popular opinion, nor can personnel do their best work without adequate knowledge of where they fit in.”

General Omar Bradley

The Army public affairs mission is to promote awareness, understanding, and support Army activities and programs. Its primary audience is the American public, its soldiers, civilian employees and the communities it serves. It's a dynamic Army-wide communications enterprise which uses all media — newspapers, magazines, radio, television, and personal contact — to increase understanding of Today's Army. The public affairs mission is divided into three major functional areas — media relations, command information and community relations.



Figure 1. Army public affairs promotes awareness and support

2. MEDIA RELATIONS

“Our uniformed men and women are, in a very profound sense, public servants. The military services are public institutions, totally accountable to the American citizenry.”

William P. Clements
Former Deputy Secretary of Defense

a. The public's right to know, and, hence, the Army's duty to inform, are founded upon our Constitution's guarantees of free speech and free press. As public servants, we are obligated to meet the public's need for factual information about its Army, because their perceptions continually influence national defense programs and benefits which affect our service members.

b. Public affairs officers are often assigned media relations jobs which require direct and frequent interaction with members of the working media — at local, national, or even international levels.



Figure 2. The public has a right to know — the Army has a duty to inform



Figure 3. Public affairs officers are often assigned media relations jobs

3. COMMAND INFORMATION

“Impress upon the mind of every man, the importance of the cause and what it is they are contending for.”

George Washington

a. An equally important facet of the public affairs mission is command (or internal) information, as it is the soldier who must bear the ultimate burden of defending our nation. The soldier who is kept informed and who thoroughly understands his or her role in America’s defense, is better prepared to meet the rigors and demands of military duty.

b. Command Information Officers serve at every level. They assist commanders in providing accurate, timely and useful information to soldiers and their families. Among their chief responsibilities are planning for command information support and supervising preparation and distribution of print and electronic media products such as Army newspapers, bulletins, brochures, radio and video news programs, and special radio and video features. Some officers are assigned to the American Forces Radio and Television Service, a joint activity providing radio and television to service men and women overseas.



Figure 4. The soldier who is kept informed is better prepared

4. COMMUNITY RELATIONS

“The Army exists for one purpose — to serve the American people. It belongs to the people, and it is made up of the people. It draws its officers and soldiers from every walk of life — from every part of America. The Army is a cross section of our free society. Every citizen is a stockholder in the US Army.”

Gen. William C. Westmoreland
Former Chief of Staff of the Army

a. Americans, young and old, always have been, and always will be, fascinated by soldiers and their equipment. Opening our doors, in the United States and overseas, within the limits of security, enables Americans and our allied hosts to identify with and learn more about the Army. The individual soldier remains our best and most effective means of reflecting who we are, what we do, and how we do it.



Figure 5. The individual soldier is still our best means of reflecting who we are

b. Even though all Army personnel are responsible for enhancing relations between the Army and the community, the public affairs officer is responsible for the overall planning and coordinating effort. Whether it be speaking at a luncheon, conducting group tours, or providing exhibits at various functions, the Army public affairs officer is a vital link in sharing the Army with civilian communities. Some of the more well known community relations programs involve performances (Army bands, precision parachuting exhibitions by the famous Golden Knights, speaking engagements of Army leaders) for both military and civilian audiences, and the annual Armed Forces Day Celebration at Army installations worldwide.



Figure 6. Community relations may involve precision parachuting exhibitions

5. PUBLIC AFFAIRS ASSIGNMENTS

The public affairs officer (PAO) represents the commander and command in its communications with the public and the media. The PAO normally has a staff comprised of other officers, enlisted personnel, and/or civilians.

a. Army-wide, there are more than 350 positions open to Army public affairs officers in the grades of captain through major general.

b. These positions are located throughout the world at various Department of Defense agencies/activities and at Department of the Army installations, divisions, corps, ROTC and recruiting regions.

c. The following is a sampling of typical public affairs assignments:

Table 1
Sampling of typical public affairs assignments

Grade	Position
Captain	Staff Officer, Public Affairs Office at all levels Commander, Public Affairs Detachment Instructor, Defense Information School
Major	Public Affairs Officer, Division Support Command, Installation, or Activity Staff Officer, Public Affairs Officer at all levels Officer-in-Charge, American Forces Radio and Television Service Station Instructor, Defense Information School
Lieutenant Colonel	Public Affairs Officer, Corps, Installation, or Joint Command Editor, Service or School Journal or magazine Commander American Forces Radio and Television Service Network Advertising and Public Affairs Officer, ROTC Region

Table 1
Sampling of typical public affairs assignments—Continued

Grade	Position
Colonel	Chief Public Affairs for a major Army or Joint Command Director, Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense (Public Affairs) Division Chief, Office, Chief of Public Affairs, Office Secretary of the Army Commandant, Defense Information School Editor-in-Chief, European or Pacific <i>Stars & Stripes</i> Commander, Army and Air Force Hometown News Directorate
Brigadier General	Deputy, Chief of Public Affairs, Office, Secretary of the Army
Major General	Chief of Public Affairs, Office Secretary of the Army

6. TRAINING THE PUBLIC AFFAIRS OFFICER

In addition to the military schools available to all officers (i.e., basic and advanced courses, command and staff college, senior service college) public affairs offers the following specialized training:

PUBLIC AFFAIRS OFFICER COURSE (PAOC)

The PAOC is a nine-week, three-day basic course taught at the Defense Information School (DINFOS), Fort Benjamin Harrison, Indiana. All officers should attend this introductory course prior to their first public affairs assignment. The curriculum stresses communications theory and techniques; statutory and other constraints unique to the conduct of public affairs and broadcast operations within the military; and practical exercises in public information, command information, media relations, and community relations. Officers projected for assignment to the American Forces Radio and Television Service or other duties concerned with broadcast operations usually attend the three-week Broadcast Managers Course (BMC) — also at DINFOS.



Figure 7. Training the public affairs officer

7. ADVANCED PUBLIC AFFAIRS TRAINING

GRADUATE SCHOOL at civilian institutions is offered to selected officers who have been awarded the specialty of public affairs as their functional area. Officers may apply for up to 18 months of fully-funded graduate level study in journalism or related areas (i. e., mass communications, television production, public relations, or advertising) at civilian colleges and universities of their choice. Consideration for such training normally will occur through the twelfth year of commissioned service. TRAINING WITH INDUSTRY (TWI) provides hands-on civilian training for four officers who then have a mandatory utilization tour in specific public affairs positions. Officers in grades captain through lieutenant colonel apply through the U.S. Army Military Personnel Center. Military Personnel Center then nominates to OCPA. The period of training is flexible, but normally runs 12 months. THE ARMY ADVANCED PUBLIC AFFAIRS COURSE (AAPAC) is designed for Army Public Affairs practitioners who have demonstrated potential for increased responsibility in key public affairs assignments at installations, Engineer Districts, Depots, Corps, Major Commands, Department of the Army and Department of Defense. AAPAC is considered to be the

capstone course in Army public affairs schooling. The 10-week course is taught at the graduate level and includes the study of public relations principles, issues management, and strategic planning.

8. THE PUBLIC AFFAIRS CHALLENGE

a. Army public affairs is filled with professional challenges and rewards for those officers, from any accession specialty, who want to help the Army accomplish its mission.

b. Public affairs officers are professionals who, as official spokespersons for the Army, must be able to determine the importance and sensitivity of information and make rapid decisions concerning its release. Determining public attitudes and being able to give the commander expert advice on all public affairs matters are important elements of the PAOs duties. In short, the public affairs officer must be a self-confident and perceptive person who can communicate effectively.

9. BECOMING A PUBLIC AFFAIRS OFFICER

a. As evidenced by the wide range of activities spearheaded by public affairs, officers who have solid qualifications in their branch, a thorough understanding of the Army, and who can communicate effectively with the Army's many audiences, are needed for Functional Area 46.

b. The main emphasis during the company grade years is directed toward the development of branch skills. Generally, the PAO who is less than a "whole officer," branch qualified as well as public affairs trained, will find it difficult to gain acceptance and trust among fellow officers who control access to information, a commodity without which the PAO cannot function. A broad range of experience also enhances the PAO's credibility when dealing with media representatives and civic leaders. Junior officers should not hesitate from stating a public affairs preference, for every effort is made to meet the limited requirements for junior grade PAOs from among those who possess the preference, academic background or civilian acquired skills for such positions.

c. A more formal discussion of branch and functional area terminology and designation procedures is presented in Chapter 46, DA Pamphlet 600-3, Commissioned Officer Professional Development and Utilization.

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