



COMMUNICATION GUIDEBOOK



OFFICE OF THE CHIEF OF PUBLIC AFFAIRS

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“Effective communication is an essential aspect of leadership, and telling the Army story is every leader’s responsibility.”

The Honorable Mark T. Esper

23RD SECRETARY OF THE ARMY

INTRODUCTION

Engaging the public, including the media, can be a challenge, but it is also essential. Maintaining the trust and confidence of the American people takes an entire Army.

This guidebook is a quick reference to help you plan, prepare, execute and assess public engagements. It was written for – and promotes shared understanding among – commanders, spokespersons, public affairs officers and unit public affairs representatives (UPARs).

Use this for unit training and to help Army leaders and Soldiers prepare for engagements with the public. These pages combine the Army operations process and other key doctrine with engagement best practices to help Army leaders and Soldiers authentically tell their story, their unit's story and the Army story.

This book also discusses roles and responsibilities of the key players in any engagement with the public or media. Additionally, it features valuable insights from public stakeholders and news reporters who regularly engage with military leaders. It closes with a review of OPSEC/privacy policies and social media tips.



A 4th Inf. Div. Soldier speaks with media in Poland. Engagement with the U.S. and international media helps build worldwide trust and confidence in the U.S. Army.

PHOTO BY STAFF SGT. MICAH VANDYKE

- “ There is a great story to tell the people about today’s Total Army...
- “ Persons of every rank... (are) encouraged to participate in its telling. Our very existence and ability to perform our mission depends upon the vitality of our professional thought and effort, and in public understanding and support. ”

General Bernard W. Rogers

28TH CHIEF OF STAFF OF THE ARMY



A colonel from XVIII Airborne Corps speaks to community volunteers during a Wreaths Across America event. Public engagements like this strengthen ties with the American public.

PHOTO BY PFC. HUBERT D. DELANY III

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Unit Commander / Leader

Public affairs is a command responsibility (AR 360-1). One of the commander's tasks within the mission command warfighting function is to "inform and influence audiences, inside and outside their organizations" (FM 3-0). Just as the commander drives the operations process, he or she similarly drives the public affairs process of **planning, preparing, executing and assessing** public engagements.

Specifically, the commander will:

- Ensure internal and external audiences receive accurate, unclassified information about the Army, with maximum disclosure and minimum delay.
- Ensure units are responsive to the public, including news media, and are trained on proper online conduct.
- Be ready to speak publicly as an Army messenger.
- Provide guidance on public affairs strategies, plans and operations, and evaluate their effectiveness.
- Designate spokespersons to release information. Public affairs is an inherently governmental function, so official spokespersons should be military or DoD/ Army civilian personnel.
- Appoint a unit public affairs representative (UPAR) to any unit not supported by a designated PAO.
- Resource and ensure PA connectivity to engage audiences and monitor the information environment.

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Spokesperson

A spokesperson is **any member of the Army who is willing, able and authorized to participate in a news media interview or other public speaking engagement on the Army's behalf.**

An Army spokesperson could be a trained and officially designated individual serving as a full-time spokesperson, but most often, they are leaders and Soldiers serving in their own duty positions at the ground level.

Soldiers and DoD/Army civilians, with their first-hand experience and expertise, typically are the most authentic, credible and powerful spokespersons in the Army.

For any public engagement, the spokesperson should:

- Be willing. The Army needs to tell its story.
- Be open, honest and authentic. Credibility is key.
- Be personal. Speak about your Army experience.
- Be on message. Understand the Army's position, and remember what message you want to convey.
- Be articulate. This takes preparation and practice.
- Be flexible. Interviews are dynamic, so plan ahead. Always stay message-driven, not question-driven.
- Be teachable. Public affairs staff can help you find your true voice and effectively tell your Army story.

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Public Affairs Officer (PAO)

PAOs help commanders fulfill the Army's fundamental duty of informing the American people and other audiences and stakeholders. They serve on the commander's personal staff and directly manage all phases of the engagement process: **planning, preparation, execution and assessment.**

Specifically for media engagements, the PAO will:

- Conduct all planning and coordination for public or media engagement - negotiating the ground rules, time, location, format and scope of the interview.
- Research reporter's/outlet's recent coverage, areas of interest and likely questions.
- Keep commander and staff informed.
- Inform and coordinate with higher-level PAO.
- Provide read-ahead to the spokesperson, with relevant information about the engagement, at least one day prior to the prep session, so the spokesperson has time to learn and internalize the information.
- Conduct prep session/rehearsal with spokesperson.
- Provide unit information (fact sheets) to reporters.
- Facilitate and monitor the engagement.
- If not present for engagement, identify and train an appropriate representative to facilitate the event.
- After engagement, follow up as needed.
- Monitor and assess the outcome or coverage.

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Unit Public Affairs Representative (UPAR)

UPARs represent their units for all public affairs functions and are typically assigned at the battalion/ squadron level and below, but are also appointed for any brigades or other organizations lacking a designated PAO (AR 360-1). Whether serving the role as an additional duty or as a full-time assignment, they are key to any media engagement with their unit. They should fulfill the PAO duties described on the previous page, through guidance and support from higher headquarters' public affairs staff.

For any media engagement, the UPAR will:

- Understand and fulfill all public engagement responsibilities of the PAO, as listed on page 5.
- Receive the necessary training and guidance to effectively plan, prepare, execute and assess a media engagement.
- Keep the commander and higher PAO informed.



3rd Inf. Div. tank crewmen speak with media in Latvia. Soldiers of all ranks help tell the Army story.

PHOTO BY STAFF SGT. BROOKS FLETCHER

STEP 1: PLAN

Initial Planning Considerations

As with any campaign plan or ongoing operation, media engagement planning should be guided by commander's intent, following the philosophy of mission command.

"Mission command is the exercise of authority and direction by the commander using mission orders to enable disciplined initiative within the commander's intent to empower agile and adaptive leaders in the conduct of unified land operations." – ADP 6-0

A PAO must fully understand the commander's intent and the information environment, and then exercise disciplined initiative to plan a compelling, on-message media engagement.

To plan a media engagement, a PAO considers:

- Commander's intent
- PA plan/annex, objectives and messages
- DoD and Army Public Affairs Guidance (PAG)
- Current news cycle and public interests
- Unit-specific issues, events or opportunities
- Spokesperson availability and readiness
- Army Public Affairs Tenets (see back cover)

FOR MORE INFORMATION ON PA PLANNING, SEE FM 3-61, CH. 5.

STEP 1: PLAN

Trained and Ready Spokespersons

Readiness is the top Army priority. Soldiers must be trained, equipped and ready to perform their duties at any time. The role of a spokesperson is no different. The successful Army unit should at all times have a number of potential spokespersons identified and trained to speak on behalf of their unit - and by extension the Army - for any topics of likely media interest. Plan ahead.

Maintain a training program to ensure these Soldiers and leaders are confident and capable Army spokespersons.

Have a crisis plan. Consider crisis events, which require rapid and responsive public communication. Have audio and video capabilities, a designated area for meeting and addressing the media, and any related logistics.

Practice your plan. Any Army training event should test personnel, processes and equipment in a realistic setting. Crisis communication plans and spokesperson training are no different.



Soldiers attend Media 101 training at Fort Hunter Liggett. The training educates Soldiers on how to interact with media.

PHOTO BY
SGT. LENA WAKAYAMA

SPECIAL NOTE: ON-BOARDING NEW SOLDIERS

Remember who you are.
Remember who you represent.

Commanders at all levels should discuss public and online conduct during the onboarding process, reminding Soldiers they represent the Army at all times.

Think, Type, Post.

When using electronic communication, members of the Army Team should apply "Think, Type, Post."

- **Think** about what messages/information is being communicated and who could potentially view it.
- **Type** messages or convey information that is consistent with the Army Values.
- **Post** if the message/information is responsible and demonstrates dignity and respect for others.

For more information, visit: www.army.mil/socialmedia/soldiers.

A battalion commander welcomes his Soldiers to Iraq during a 2019 deployment. Leaders ensure all Soldiers can professionally represent the Army.

PHOTO BY
SGT. ROGER JACKSON



STEP 1: PLAN

Identify the Engagement Opportunity

Public engagements develop in one of two ways: the Army reaches out to the public (proactive), or the public reaches out to the Army (reactive). Either way, it is an opportunity to inform the public, build trust and tell the Army story.

PROACTIVE ENGAGEMENT:

During an active PA posture, PAOs reach out to the public about subjects of public interest such as a major exercise, operation, community engagement or other compelling Army story. Be strategic. Understand the audience. What local reporters cover the Army? What local groups have a stake in the Army? What are their interests and concerns? Plan outreach accordingly, and don't overdo it. Media may tune you out if you always pitch routine, mundane events.

REACTIVE ENGAGEMENT:

The public often reaches out to the Army for information, interviews or participation in public events. When news reporters reach out, they may be seeking any interesting story, but typically they already have a topic in mind. It may be positive or neutral, or it may be a negative issue such as an accident or misconduct. Regardless, the PAO determines if the topic falls within the scope and authority of their unit and responds accordingly. Some topics such as ongoing investigations, classified data or political issues would be inappropriate in an engagement. However, if the topic falls within their lane, the PAO determines how to respond, in line with commander's intent, key messages, public affairs guidance and the Army Public Affairs Tenets.

STEP 1: PLAN

Arrange the Engagement for Inquiries

✓ Identify the reporter or stakeholder

When a reporter or other public stakeholder reaches out, establish rapport. Be polite, honest and helpful. Identify who they are and what organization/outlet they are from. Exchange contact information for follow-up discussion.

✓ Understand their request

Don't automatically agree to or refuse their request. Get a full understanding of their needs. What is their subject of interest, and what information do they want? If it's media, are they on a deadline? For other stakeholders or public groups, are they asking for the Army's participation in a public event - when and where?

✓ Know their background

Understand the individual or group's background and mission, as well as previous interactions with the Army. For media, review their coverage, especially stories about the military and your mission.

✓ Determine appropriate spokesperson(s)

Is there an appropriate leader or subject matter expert in your organization willing and able to discuss the topic?

✓ Inform commander and higher-level PAO

Coordinate with your command and higher-level PAO to ensure all parties are aware and approve of the engagement.

PRO TIP:

Every request deserves a response, but depending on the topic, the right response may be a holding statement or referral to a different or higher-level authority. Be polite and candid about why you can or cannot discuss the issue at your level.

STEP 1: PLAN

Consider and Plan for the Setting

Each type of engagement presents unique challenges and opportunities. Know the format of your engagement, then plan and rehearse accordingly. Remember, you should define the setting - don't let the setting define you! For all formats, realize the conversation continues online and on social media.

PRINT INTERVIEW:

Newspapers have longer stories and are more in-depth compared to other media - ideal for more nuanced issues or human interest stories. Print reporters can also serve as video and online journalists, so know if they plan to bring a camera/smartphone for multimedia and social media. They may also plan to record the interview to supplement their note-taking.

RADIO INTERVIEW:

Radio offers a good venue to reach local and regional audiences. Interviews may be live or pre-recorded, in the studio or over the phone. Tone of voice is important, along with tight, powerful soundbites. If it is a phone interview, use a quiet location and ensure a clear connection, with a backup plan in case it fails.

ON-CAMERA INTERVIEW:

Broadcast news is time-constrained, so message discipline and brevity are important. Consider location and backdrop. Select a space aligned with your message, well-lit and free of audiovisual distraction. Physical presence is key. Avoid too much gesturing; it can distract. Rehearse the format, so the spokesperson is prepared and confident speaking on-camera. In the case of studio interviews, seats and props are likely to portray a comfortable, natural setting for dialogue. Negotiate the layout, sequence and participants. Expect multiple camera views, which highlight non-verbal behavior. Know where the cameras are, but ignore them. Know if it's live or recorded. Prepare for 'live' - there are no redos.

STEP 1: PLAN

Consider and Plan for the Setting (cont.)

LIVE TALK-BACK:

The spokesperson looks directly into the camera and speaks to a remotely located reporter or news anchor. This takes place either in two separate studios connected through a live feed, or through off-the-shelf systems such as Skype™. A benefit of this format is the spokesperson can connect more closely with the audience by looking directly at them through the camera.

PRESS CONFERENCE / MEDIA ROUNDTABLE:

This is a more labor-intensive format, typically for senior leaders to address an issue of major public interest. Extra time, resources and personnel may be needed to accommodate all of the reporters and their equipment. Have a list of attendees, and a set agenda, such as opening/closing statements and a time-bound Q&A. Be sure to announce and enforce clear ground rules.

FOREIGN LANGUAGE ENGAGEMENT:

During simultaneous or consecutive translation, it is important to keep statements direct and succinct, with natural pauses to allow time for translation. Avoid jargon or slang. Ideally, the interpreter is from your unit so they can participate in the preparation and familiarize themselves with the messages you wish to convey. Speak to the audience, not the interpreter.

PUBLIC ENGAGEMENTS:

Public engagements take many important forms beyond news interviews. Even presence in a parade or with a particular group sends a message. For any engagement, define the purpose, players (who is being seen with the Army?), place (location, size and layout of the venue; conducive to audiovisual support?), pace (know the event flow and practice delivery), and publics.

STEP 1: PLAN

Arrange the Engagement

✓ Who?

Confirm everyone involved, by name. Identify the spokesperson, PAO escorts, reporters and outlets. Ensure media are registered, and gather personal data or equipment information needed for installation access.

✓ What?

Confirm the subject area and format of the engagement. Professional reporters generally do not submit their exact questions ahead of time but should be honest about the range of topics they wish to discuss.

✓ When?

Confirm the engagement date and time. Remember to account for any time zone differences in the event of a remote engagement. Also reserve ample time to train and prepare the spokesperson prior to the engagement.

✓ Where?

Select a location that is accessible and free of confidential materials (a sanitized environment). Confirm the space is available. Reserve it for the prep session and engagement.

✓ Why and How?

Be able to explain why you are doing this engagement. Know how it supports your public affairs goals and objectives, and how you will use it to tell the Army story.

The next and most important step is to **prepare**.

STEP 2: PREPARE

Preparation is key to engagement success and therefore is the most important section of this guidebook.

This section walks you through a proven method for engagement preparation, based on expertise from the Army Executive Communication Team.

PRO TIP:

Watch the Communication Toolkit tutorial on the PA Portal:
<https://army.deps.mil/army/cmds/OCPA/PAPortal/SitePages/Home.aspx>

Preparing for Success

In the following pages, you'll learn how to:

CONNECT:

Develop rapport with your audience and the public through a credible, authentic leader presence.

LEARN:

Understand and internalize the Army's position, and consider how it ties to your own experience.

MAP:

Build a message map to help you brainstorm and organize your thoughts around a strong central message.

CONTROL:

Be message-driven, not question-driven. Use your message map as your azimuth, and practice interview techniques to deliver your message effectively. Control your body, voice and words to stay on message.

STEP 2: PREPARE

Connect

Develop rapport with the audience and public through a credible, authentic leader presence.

Well before an interview, the effective spokesperson must devote time and thought to considering their presence and image as a leader. Does their presence strengthen or weaken their power as an Army messenger?

“Your image can be either an asset or a liability for you as a leader. Image building is neither superficial nor unimportant. It’s not about creating a false image, but recognizing genuine aspects of yourself that should be coming across to other people - but aren’t. Crafting your image requires you to gain a clear picture of the image people are currently perceiving, decide what image you would like to portray, and develop the skills to close the gap.” – Center for Creative Leadership

Positive presence helps a spokesperson connect with an audience, by being authentic, credible and accountable. This is about long-term growth and self-development. Professional reading on the topic and continuous feedback help strengthen one’s presence, and leadership, over time.

This fosters positive body language during engagements. Keep your body open, without putting pressure on the body and face. Avoid hands in front of private areas, crossed arms or other closed-off gestures. Harmony with your body, voice and words comes when you are mentally comfortable and confident. The next page discusses how to gain that mental confidence and message clarity.

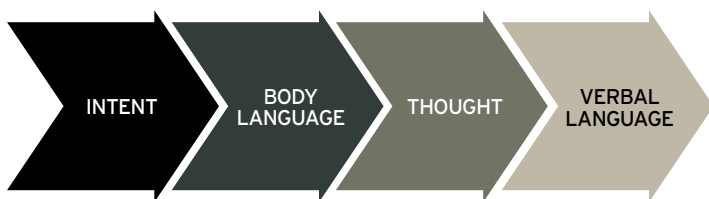
STEP 2: PREPARE

Learn

Understand and internalize the Army's position, and consider how it ties to your own experience.

As a strategic messenger, it is essential to seriously consider your personal intent with organizational intent. Knowing the organizational position supported by your own perspective can add credibility, authenticity and accountability.

Learning and communicating all begin with intent - what's in our mind and heart. Your verbal and nonverbal behavior both flow from your intent.



Work through any personal and organizational differences, because you have to find a way to align your personal view with what the Army wants to convey. Most importantly, by finding harmony between the Army's position and your own experience, you can be comfortable and confident during an engagement about any topic.

STEP 2: PREPARE

Mind and Message Map

No matter the topic, a spokesperson has various facts, thoughts and stories to sort through before an interview. Build a mind map to organize information more naturally and mentally guide you through your facts and stories to your one central, compelling Army message.

To aid you in this process, use the Army's message map shown on the following page to organize your thoughts into powerful messages, supported by your stories and facts. Improve recall, project clarity and dominate the engagement with credible presence.

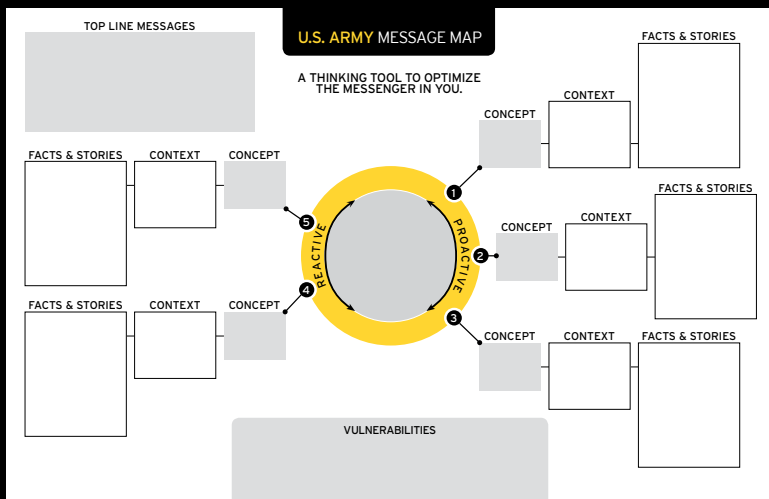
PRO TIP:

See ATP 5-0.1 "Army Design Methodology" for more about how the Army uses Mind Mapping.

Note the map is not sequential. It is the simplified version of your knowledge and experience. The map will help you:

- Develop a mental picture of your communication goal.
- Craft succinct headlines with supporting evidence, such as stories, anecdotes and examples.
- Anticipate and mitigate the land mines or hot topics that could derail the message you wish to convey. Your map can lay out branches and sequels to help you tie back to your message naturally and authentically.

Remember, an audience will be more receptive to your Army message when it is **personal, human and dramatic**.



This one-page thinking tool called the **Message Map** can add clarity by mentally processing knowledge, experiences and emotions ahead of an engagement. The above template can be found on the Public Affairs Portal, but sketching by hand is helpful. Follow these steps to mentally prepare:

- ✓ Start from the center. Write a theme for clear direction. What is your main point? What should the audience know and feel?
- ✓ Select three one-word concepts aligned with proactive messages and related to the center point. Write them in the squares to the right.
- ✓ For the first concept, add a sentence for context in the next box. Then, in the next sequential box, write a fact and story to support your point. Be brief; these short phrases are guideposts to trigger your memory.
- ✓ Follow this process for the other two main concepts.
- ✓ List contentious or bad-news issues in the "Vulnerabilities" box - anything that may complicate your communication goal. Anticipate tough questions and know the Army's position.
- ✓ Prepare a reactive response for the two vulnerable topics most likely to be asked. That topic, context, fact and story should not dominate the interview, but clearly convey the Army's position in a credible way.
- ✓ Then practice.

DOWNLOAD THE MESSAGE MAP AT:

<https://army.deps.mil/army/cmds/OCPA/PAPortal/SitePages/Home.aspx>

STEP 2: PREPARE

Control

Control yourself and the interview to ensure you remain message driven, not question driven.


Now that you have a delivery plan and articulation goal, in the form of a message map with facts and stories, you will be ready to deliver a powerful message, with the help of these essential interview techniques:


- **Pausing:** gives you control (2-3 second pause after question allows more deliberate communication).
- **Repeating:** ensures your full message in all responses.
- **Consistency:** proves you are credible.
- **Asserting:** can be used to communicate a message, redirect or set the record straight.
- **Flagging:** draws attention to your point and message! "My top priority is..."
- **Headlining:** conveys messages in concise, interesting headlines (eight words or less).
- **Blocking and Bridging:** transfers from a negative or vulnerable topic to a positive or an intended topic and message - "What's important is..."
- **Avoid the negative:** don't repeat a false or negative statement, even if you are refuting it.
- **Opening and Closing:** give simple, short first and last impressions supporting your message. The opening sets the tone. The closing recaps and puts it in context.

STEP 2: PREPARE

Control (cont.)

Part of controlling the interview is practicing the formula for an effective response to a question.


$$\text{Response} = (\text{A} + \text{M}) + \text{S}$$

- A: Answer** (confirm fact & move on)
-  **Bridge** (transition to message)
- M: Message** (a headline)
- S: Story** (personal, human, dramatic)

Respond in a way that is relevant to the question but delivers your message. Bridging helps you treat every question as an opportunity to communicate an Army message and Army story. Remember, messages are also non-verbal.

Some common bridging phrases are:

“Yes / no / I don’t know, but...”

“...what I do know is...”

“...another point I should make is...”

“...what’s important to keep in mind is..”

“...let me put that into perspective...”

Now practice these interview techniques. Use repetition to get comfortable and gain the advantage. **Rehearse!**

STEP 2: PREPARE

Communication Top Five Rules

- 1 | Mentally prepare.**
Sorting complex facts and emotions helps relax the mind and body. Prepare a message map for a clear mental picture of your communication goal.
- 2 | Be message driven, not question driven.**
Have mental direction and master interview techniques.
- 3 | Practice good behavior.**
Communication is behavior, verbal and non-verbal. Find harmony by sorting the complex in advance and practicing 'good behavior.'
- 4 | Expect the unexpected.**
Anticipate what reporters will likely ask. Mitigate vulnerabilities in advance by knowing the Army's position on hot and emerging topics of the day. During your prep session, practice answering the challenging questions that may arise during the interview.
- 5 | Never let the setting define you.**
You define the setting. Know you, the audience and other variables like the event flow, timing and room or venue.

Now that you have a delivery plan, in the form of a message map with facts and stories, and you have practiced and rehearsed for the engagement, you are ready to tell your Army story - personally, powerfully and credibly.

STEP 3: EXECUTE

Conducting the Engagement

This is where planning and preparation pay off. Time spent doing the engagement is minimal compared to time needed to properly prepare and rehearse, so ensure you completed all planning and preparation discussed earlier.

On the day of the engagement, the spokesperson and PAO/UPAR have several key tasks to fulfill. **Use the checklist on the following two pages to remember those tasks for every engagement.**

Note: While some steps may seem specific to reporters and media engagements, they can also apply to public engagements of any kind.



A 1st Cav. Div. sergeant speaks with local media in Bulgaria. Confident and positive body language helps strengthen your presence and the power of your Army message.

PHOTO BY SPC. HANNAH TARKELLY

STEP 3: EXECUTE

Conducting the Engagement

Spokesperson tasks on the day of the engagement:

BEFORE BEGINNING ENGAGEMENT:

- Ensure you prepared and practiced with your message map.
- Check your uniform and appearance.
- Meet with PAO/UPAR before the engagement to verify interview subject, format, time limit and location.
- Hydrate your voice with room-temperature water.
- Relax. Do not try to cram or memorize.
- Stretch the body and face. Take 15 deep breaths and sing to relax the jaw and voice.
- Be courteous, professional and sincere as you meet the reporter. Realize you are on the record from the start.

DURING ENGAGEMENT:

- Be succinct and message-driven, not question-driven.
- Use the techniques you practiced to control your body, voice and words throughout the engagement.
- Remember to protect OPSEC and stay in your lane.
- Use plain English, avoiding slang, jargon or acronyms.
- Be honest and authentic. Speak to your experience.
- If you don't know or can't discuss something, say so. (Don't speculate, evade or say "No comment.")

AT CONCLUSION OF ENGAGEMENT:

- "Anything to add?" Have a strong closing message.
- You are still on the record until the reporter departs.
- Be gracious. Thank the reporter for their time.

STEP 3: EXECUTE

Conducting the Engagement

PAO/UPAR tasks on the day of the engagement:

BEFORE BEGINNING ENGAGEMENT:

- Contact reporter to confirm linkup time and location.
- Meet with spokesperson to ensure they are prepared and clear on the topic, format, time and location.
- Alert leaders/staff before media arrive; no surprises.
- Ensure engagement location is set up and ready; sanitize the space of classified information, secret maps, etc.
- Meet reporter and provide fact sheet/backgrounder.
- Introduce reporter and spokesperson.
- Establish comfortable, professional climate.
- Restate interview topic, ground rules and time limit.
- Let reporter know you will record and take notes.

DURING ENGAGEMENT:

- Monitor the engagement, record and take notes.
- Take note of any misstatements, misunderstandings or any points requiring clarification or more information.
- If necessary to protect OPSEC, interrupt tactfully.
- Tactfully note or signal if approaching the time limit.

AT CONCLUSION OF ENGAGEMENT:

- Politely clarify any misstatement or misunderstanding.
- Review any questions or issues requiring follow-up.
- Confirm publication/broadcast date and time.
- Exchange contact information for follow-up.
- Escort media until they have departed.

PRO-TIP: HELPFUL TOOLS FOR YOUR KITBAG

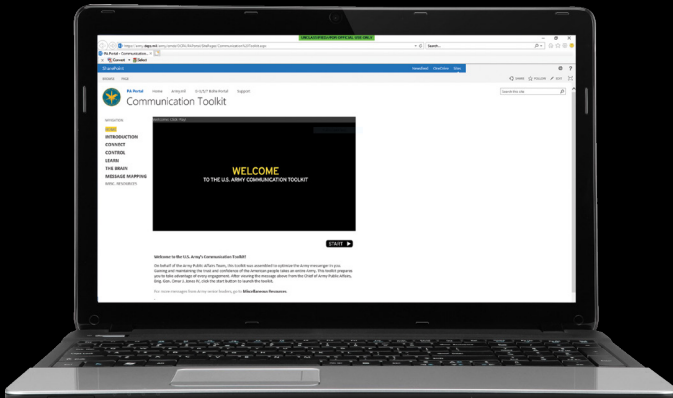
To further build your skills as an Army messenger, visit the Army Communication Toolkit on the Public Affairs Portal:

<https://army.deps.mil/army/cmds/OCPA/PAPortal/SitePages/Home.aspx>

NOTE: Select CAC email certificate when prompted.

The video tutorial fully explains the tactics and tools Army senior leaders learn for their own engagements.

While this guidebook covers these same important topics, it is best to also explore the many videos and training tools available in the online Army Communication Toolkit.



STEP 4: ASSESS

Immediate Debrief and AAR

Just after the engagement, the spokesperson and PAO privately discuss how it went. The conversation should be respectful and candid, with three main discussion points:

✓ **Assess spokesperson's performance.**

Every spokesperson needs an honest and impartial assessment of how they performed in the engagement. This can resemble the “sustains and improves” of a typical After Action Review. Evaluate their overall tone and verbal/nonverbal behavior. Highlight any particularly strong answers, and discuss how to strengthen any answers that may have been poorly delivered. The goal is to help them learn and improve for future engagements.

✓ **Determine need for follow-up.**

Review questions that may require follow-up. If the spokesperson did not have the information on-hand to answer a question, research and provide the answer afterward. If any questions were above or outside the spokesperson's lane, direct them to the appropriate officials. If an answer was incorrect or off-message, reach out quickly with a correction or clarification.

✓ **Forecast the coverage and impact.**

It is impossible to precisely predict the outcome or coverage of a public/media engagement, but the interview or event itself provides an indication. Consider areas of particular focus, any challenging questions and how well the spokesperson conveyed the Army's message on the topic.

STEP 4: ASSESS

Monitor and Analyze the Response

After the engagement and debrief with the spokesperson, the PAO follows up with the reporter or stakeholders, as needed. The PAO then monitors and analyzes the public response / media coverage of the engagement, providing that analysis - with recommendations - to the command.

✓ **Monitor public response and coverage.**

Scan the information space continuously to identify when the story or stories are released in traditional and social media. Use whatever monitoring tools are available at your level, and in coordination with any higher-level PA assets. Search engine tools like news alerts may help. Remember, the public conversation continues online.

✓ **Analyze public response and coverage.**

Assess the outcome. Is coverage accurate and balanced? If anything is factually incorrect or out of context, reach out to the reporter to correct the record. Beyond that, did the Army's message get through? What was the story's tone (positive, neutral or negative)? What was the reach? In all, does the story support your PA plan and objectives? Answer these questions in a data-driven report to the commander, spokesperson and staff.

✓ **Make recommendations to the commander.**

Your analysis answers the "so what," but you also should answer "now what?" As with initial planning before the engagement, the PAO again applies commander's intent, public affairs guidance and other planning factors to recommend a way ahead, consolidating gains in the information space and reinforcing the Army's message.

STEP 4: ASSESS

Example Report to the Commander

This notional report offers one example of how a PAO may provide a command team with an assessment of coverage following a media engagement, along with recommendations for further action.

TO: Brigade CDR

CC: Brigade CSM, Deputy CDR, XO, S-3, DIV PAO, BDE PA Staff

Ma'am,

Coverage from your media roundtable was overall fair and accurate, reflecting our Coalition themes of success and solidarity. The local wire reporters each published partial or full interview read-outs, which were re-published and printed in five more newspapers. Of note, the TV interview was favorable and played as a 90-second segment at the top of every hour last night.

Media covered the following topics. See below for excerpts/quotes:

Success of our Army partners:

(Daily News) "U.S. Army Colonel Jane Doe congratulated allies on the liberation of 90 percent of their land from the aggressors and said, 'Together we celebrate the liberation of these lands as we stand shoulder-to-shoulder with our local partners and allies.'"

[...additional media themes, excerpts and quotes would go here...]

In total, ma'am, the coverage was accurate, balanced and positive, allowing us to deliver our message of success and solidarity with the local people. Based on estimated viewership, we believe the print and media coverage reached 5-10 million people, mostly in the capital region. Related coverage on social media also expanded our reach.

I recommend we engage a news radio station in your next interview, to ensure our message reaches rural audiences who lack the capital region's robust television and internet connectivity. Pending your guidance, I will stand by to contact local news radio outlets.

“ It’s been amazing to me, as the state’s chief executive, to get to know just what exactly today’s Army is all about.

“ I know that I speak for the people of Massachusetts when I talk about our great relationships... with the Army. ”

Charlie Baker

72ND GOVERNOR OF MASSACHUSETTS

EXCERPT FROM ARMY.MIL NEWS ARTICLE



An Army brigadier general speaks at Boston’s first-ever “Army Week” in April 2019, alongside Massachusetts Gov. Charlie Baker and other civic leaders. Public engagements are key to building trust between the Army and the American public.

PHOTO BY DAVID WEDEMEYER

INSIGHTS FROM LEADING REPORTERS

Luis Martinez

ABC NEWS PENTAGON CORRESPONDENT

What could be improved in a typical Army interview?

- “ For me, the canned response is what I don't like. Sure, stick to talking points. You're going to prep individuals, and they need to be prepped, so they can stay within their lane. That's key. But at the same time, give them the latitude to talk within those talking points so they can actually explain what it is they do. Otherwise, if I'm just going to hear a talking point, I could have gotten that from just ping-ponging the public affairs officer, and that's not what I want.
- “ I want some personality to show up, I want some life experience that is actually going to tell the story of what it is they're doing and tell the story of the mission that's going on. That is, for me, the best thing. ”

David Zucchini

NEW YORK TIMES MILITARY CORRESPONDENT

In your eyes, what makes a credible spokesperson?

- “ Someone who is direct, honest and forthcoming - who acknowledges it if they don't know the facts or are not an expert in a particular subject. And most of all, someone who is accessible and responds promptly to inquiries - and has a sense of humor, at least off the record. ”

What would you tell senior leaders and Soldiers about access?

- “ Access is paramount. We can't do our jobs unless we can speak directly to those who have information and/or expertise and, ideally, see things for ourselves by spending time with troops. We realize that PAOs have to answer questions from many, many journalists, especially on deadline, so we always appreciate it when someone is diligent and responsive - even if it's only to say that they can't comment or don't know the facts in question.
(Continued on next page.)

INSIGHTS FROM LEADING REPORTERS

(Continued from previous page.)

- “ We would rather explain that in a story rather than saying the military did not respond to requests for comment. Also, PAOs should remember that they have a great story to tell: The many dedicated men and women who carry out their duties with courage and professionalism. Let us watch them do their work. ”

What role does trust play?

- “ Trust is essential. PAO officers can earn our trust by being honest and forthright - telling us what they know and what they don't know. We can earn their trust by quoting them accurately and by accurately reporting the context of their answers - for example, by telling the reader the question that elicited a particular response, especially if the subject is complex or especially nuanced. We must also rigorously abide by any agreements on matters that are on the record or off the record, and by getting our facts right by double-checking and triple-checking our stories before publication. ”

What makes a good interview?

- “ A subject who knows the material and presents it in a logical, straightforward way - avoiding military jargon as much as possible or explaining jargon if it is used. And a good anecdote is often helpful. ”

What are some things you wish military members would do differently in interviews?

- “ Try to relax and not be so rigid or formal. ”

What do you need from the Army after an interview?

- “ To be available to go over any remaining questions or confusion. I regularly contact PAOs after I've gone over my notes or tapes and have written my first draft. Many times, new questions or clarifications will arise. ”

EXAMPLE MESSAGES

SAFETY

- Safety is a top priority for us.
- People are our most important asset and their safety is essential to our continued success.
- We are proud of our safety record and continually strive to improve it.

HUMANITARIAN MISSIONS

- We are proud to be participating in this mission to save lives.
- We are here because they need our help.
- This exemplifies our ability to perform any mission, anytime and anywhere in the world.

COOPERATION

- The teamwork we saw was vital to our success.
- This is one more example of the base and town working together for the good of the community.

ENVIRONMENT

- We are committed to protecting the environment.
- We've dedicated people and resources to restoring areas damaged in the past.
- We've identified ways to protect our environment, making it safer for our children and their future.
- We're working hard to do our part in cleaning up America.

TRAINING

- We train every day, in everything we do.
- We train like we will fight.
- Our training ensures we are ready to fight anywhere, any time.
- Our training is tough and realistic, encouraging the most of our people.

EXAMPLE MESSAGES

PEOPLE

- People are responsible for the success of our mission.
- People are our most important asset.
- There is no substitute for excellence in caring for people.

INVESTIGATION

- The incident/accident is under investigation.
- I won't speculate. We need to know all the facts first.

EQUAL OPPORTUNITY

- We are committed to practicing and promoting equal opportunity for every member of the <unit name>.
- The <unit name> reflects the diversity of America.
- Equal opportunity ensures we can all serve our country.

JUSTICE

- We set high standards and won't tolerate anything less.
- We are ensuring everyone involved receives fair and just treatment.
- S/he will receive the judicial process guaranteed by the constitution.

SEXUAL HARASSMENT

- The <unit name> does not tolerate sexual harassment in any way, shape or form.
- Sexual harassment has no place in <group name>.

CONDOLENCES

- We extend our deepest sympathies to the <surname> family.
- We've lost a valuable member of the team. S/he will be sorely missed.
- This loss is felt not only by the post, but the whole community.

COMMUNITY RELATIONS

- We're proud to be part of the community and strive to be good neighbors. Our families live, work and go to school here, just like you.

OPSEC GUIDELINES

Protect operations security.

Do **not** discuss:

- ✘ Precise numbers of troops, equipment, supplies, casualties or battle damage.
- ✘ Future or ongoing operations or strikes.
- ✘ Security protocols on bases or outposts.
- ✘ Details or imagery of base layout/security.
- ✘ Intel collection methods and ISR activities.
- ✘ Special Operations personnel and activities.
- ✘ COMSEC and electronic countermeasures.
- ✘ Enemy tactics and effectiveness, including targeting, direct/indirect fire, and IEDs.
- ✘ Specific ROE or Escalation of Force measures.
- ✘ Planned/ongoing search and rescue operation.
- ✘ Any other specific details vital to troop safety.
- ✘ **Off limits to media: Classified environments** (TOCs, CPs, etc.), documents (orders, maps, reports, etc.), and displays (SIPR, BFT, etc.).

If in doubt, spokespersons should consult their PAO, intelligence or operations offices to confirm what information is protected by OPSEC.

PRIVACY GUIDELINES

Protect service member privacy.

Remember:

- Protect service members' personal, legal, health and family information, especially any data covered by the Privacy Act and Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA).
- The names of deceased personnel remain private until 24 hours after next-of-kin notification. Afterwards, the DoD issues the initial announcement identifying the deceased.
- Do not identify injured personnel by name, only the number of injured and their general condition.
- Allies and partners may have specific national caveats restricting public use of their service member names and images. Observe these caveats during any multinational operations. Also ensure any non-U.S. personnel have the permission of their national authorities before participating in any media engagement.

Please Note:

- These OPSEC and privacy/policy guidelines apply to all public engagements, media interviews and social media activities.
- Every Soldier and leader should practice security at the source and protect secret and sensitive information in all forms.

GETTING SOCIAL: GUIDELINES FOR ONLINE PRESENCE

- 1. Know your audience.** Find the balance between what they want and what the commander wants, so your platform becomes the trusted source of relevant information.
- 2. Content must be creative and relevant.** You must be able to provide needed information in a way that catches the attention of your audience. In video, the first three seconds are the most important, and photos must be captivating. You have to “stop the scroll” as people are going through their feed.
- 3. Social media engagement is not optional.** Your audience is looking to have a conversation, not just having information pushed to them. Be authentic in how you talk to them.

For more information, visit: www.army.mil/socialmedia.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES:

Army Doctrine:

<https://armypubs.army.mil>

- **AR 360-1:** The Army Public Affairs Program
- **FM 3-0:** Operations
- **FM 3-61:** Communication Strategy and PA Operations
- **ADRP 6-0:** Mission Command
- **ATP 5-0.1:** Army Design Methodology

Army Public Affairs Portal:

<https://army.deps.mil/army/cmds/OCPA/PAPortal/SitePages/Home.aspx>

- Select CAC email certificate when prompted.
- This site includes the Army Communication Toolkit video tutorial.

U.S. ARMY PUBLIC AFFAIRS TENETS

PRACTICE ETHICAL CONDUCT.

PROVIDE MAXIMUM DISCLOSURE, MINIMUM DELAY.

TELL THE TRUTH.

PROVIDE TIMELY AND ACCURATE PUBLIC
AND VISUAL INFORMATION.

PRACTICE SECURITY AT THE SOURCE.

PROVIDE CONSISTENT INFORMATION AT ALL LEVELS.

TELL THE ARMY STORY.



www.army.mil