



CURTIS E. LEMAY CENTER

FOR DOCTRINE DEVELOPMENT AND EDUCATION



ANNEX 3-61 PUBLIC AFFAIRS OPERATIONS

MEDIA ENVIRONMENT

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Mass media outlets are key actors in the [information environment](#) (IE). Their role has significant implications for modern warfare. Through technology and a complex web of formal and informal support and integration relationships, today's mass media outlets possess global reach with capabilities and tactics that mirror those of the modern US military. Most major national and international media outlets actively gather, synthesize, and distribute news and information around the clock at a very high tempo. Though all media outlets have their own editorial policy and define and cover news differently, most major national and international outlets focus heavily on military operations during times of international crisis and war. The operational reality for the US military is that the media are, and will continue to be, key actors during crises and conflicts.

Most media outlets cover military operations from multiple perspectives. They simultaneously pursue stories on all aspects of warfare—strategic, operational, tactical, diplomatic, economic, and human interest. They leverage technology and a complex network of reporters and sources to provide audiences insight into as many dimensions of the news as possible. As with military operations, senior editors and producers at these outlets make important strategic decisions at a rapid pace, often with less than perfect situational awareness. In this modern, highly competitive industry, media places tremendous emphasis on seizing the initiative, and then providing agile, timely responses to world events.

The evolution of the global and public information environments increased the demand for information and the competition to discover and report unique stories. The 24-hour news cycle results in more analysis and editorial commentary that may or may not present an accurate account of military operations. Additionally, news media and social media can drive mass media coverage of events that might not otherwise garner traditional media attention. Modern military operations are widely viewed events where at least one side's actions are watched in real time by the global audience. Worldwide audiences, including US deployed forces and their adversaries, can receive a wide range of information from a growing number of sources. This information may be of dubious or unknown quality and could be part of an adversary's [propaganda](#) or misinformation campaign. The tremendous growth of internet use and its ubiquitous global access make it a popular medium to deliver such information.