



OFFICE OF THE ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF DEFENSE  
1400 DEFENSE PENTAGON  
WASHINGTON, DC 20301-1400

PUBLIC AFFAIRS

November 28, 2012

MEMORANDUM FOR COMMANDERS OF THE COMBATANT COMMANDS

SUBJECT: Communications Synchronization – A Local Coordination Process

This memorandum is in response to questions from the field about the status of Public Affairs and Strategic Communication (SC) in Office of the Secretary of Defense (OSD). The responsibility for SC in OSD was shared by the Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Public Affairs (OASD-PA) (Communications Planning and Integration) and USD(P) (Global Engagement). COCOMs typically sent SC plans to these organizations for coordination and approval. SC was viewed as a means to synchronize communication efforts across the department, however, over the last six years we learned that it actually added a layer of staffing and planning that blurred the roles and functions of traditional staff elements and resulted in confusion and inefficiencies. As a result, this year we stood down these staff elements. We also realized that these SC plans mostly contained public affairs planning that we once again expect to come through public affairs channels.

We avoid using the term SC to avoid causing confusion. The more accurate terminology, which will be used in future Joint Publications, is communication synchronization. We are continuing our leadership role in communication and reminding those in the communication business that most things previously termed “SC” are in fact Public Affairs responsibilities.

It is the role of the information related community (Information Operations, Legislative Affairs, Public Affairs...) to ensure the leader’s intent is reflected in every staff product, and that the various parts of a command are closely synchronized-there should be no difference between what the Public Affairs office is saying, the J5 is planning and the J3 is doing. This process can be accomplished with working groups and steering groups in concert with base planning and don't require the creation of additional staff elements.

Communication goals should be managed by existing staff elements and in most cases this should be the Public Affairs office. The process requires senior leader involvement and dialogue. Without commander engagement, communication synchronization cannot work.

Thank you for your efforts to ensure this important function is accomplished. These efforts will be formalized as joint doctrine in future versions of the joint publication series.

George E. Little  
Assistant to the Secretary of Defense  
for Public Affairs



cc:

Army Chief of Public Affairs

Chief Information Officer

Air Force Public Affairs

Director of Marine Corps Public Affairs