

Media Facilitation Plan Worksheet

by CPT Christopher C. Garver, Public Affairs Observer/Controller, JRTC

Recent operations in Panama, Iraq, Somalia, Haiti, and Bosnia have demonstrated that media presence is an inescapable condition of the modern battlefield. **FM 100-6, *Information Operations***, acknowledges the importance of telling the Army story: "DoD and Army policy for principles of combat coverage require Army commanders to provide open and independent coverage by the news media as the standard means of providing the American public information about the employment and capabilities of their armed forces." **FM 100-6** further charges all commanders and leaders with "preparing their soldiers to effectively deal with the media before, during, and after all operations."

At most echelons below division level, the commander has no special staff to address public affairs issues. This does not relieve the commander of public affairs responsibilities, as "often, brigade and smaller units have to house, support, and escort reporters." Units must, therefore, be trained and ready to support media personnel and tell the Army story without the benefit of public affairs specialists present.

Facilitating the media's efforts to get their story may at times be distracting and a drain of resources. The commander with a well-defined information strategy, however, will recognize the media event for what it is: a chance to tell the unit's and the Army's story through the media to the American public.

The following Media Facilitation Planning Worksheet (MFPW) is a tool to assist units without organic Public Affairs personnel in planning media facilitation operations.

PART ONE: MISSION ANALYSIS

Part one of the MFPW captures the unit's planning guidance for planning a media facilitation operation. This parallels mission analysis of the Military Decision-Making Process.

The first block defines the *commander's intent* for the media operation. The commander's intent drives the entire operation and should answer the questions, "What do we want the media to take away from the operation? What do we want to end up in the news?" These should be presented as themes, which can be found in the current Public Affairs Guidance and Information Operations annexes to the ongoing operation. Themes from higher headquarters should be applied specifically to the unit to assist personnel in staying in their lane. As a basic planning factor, a company can reinforce one to two themes, a battalion can reinforce two to four, and a brigade can reinforce three to five. This block also lists the higher headquarters' Public Affairs representatives, who should be queried for additional support and guidance.

The second block is for the reporters the unit expects to arrive. This information comes from higher headquarters' Public Affairs representatives, Fragmentary Orders, unit Situation Reports, and personal experience.

PART TWO: COURSE OF ACTION DEVELOPMENT

Part Two of the MFPW elaborates the unit's media facilitation operation. This correlates to course-of-action development of the Military Decision-Making Process.

Each event listed in the final itinerary reinforces in some way one of the themes listed in the commander's intent. Units reinforce themes in two ways: with interviews, or who talks to the media, and with photo opportunities, or what we show the media. Remember that this is a *proposed* itinerary the unit will offer to the media upon their arrival – specific media requests for information may force alterations at the last minute.

The proposed interviews the unit will offer to the media are selected to reinforce at least one of the themes in the commander's intent. Soldiers should be selected to participate in interviews with the intent of discussing specific events. Ensure that media operation planners who select a soldier to speak to the media inform that soldier exactly why he or she was selected – let soldiers know that it is okay to talk about the events we expect them to discuss. Use ten to fifteen minutes per interview as a planning factor, though more time should be allocated for larger media groups. Commanders should provide overviews and reinforce all or most of the unit's themes.

Proposed photo opportunities are also selected to reinforce the themes of the commander's intent. Review the events during

planning with a discerning eye – ensure they present the proper professional image of the unit and the Army. Photo opportunities should assist the reporter in defining the unit in the news. It is difficult for the press to publish a story about an armor battalion without photographs or a video of tanks. Photo opportunities must also be related to the themes they will reinforce; a photo opportunity of a unit's mess hall operations will probably not reinforce a theme of the unit's combat readiness.

These interview and photo opportunities are synchronized into a proposed itinerary. Ensure necessary resources, such as an armed escort to provide convoy security, are coordinated to support the operation. Identify any operational security concerns in the "notes" column, so unit media escorts have an OPSEC quick reference. Ensure soldiers responsible for particular events receive a copy of the itinerary.

PART THREE: EXECUTION

Ensure the finished plan is disseminated throughout the command. Consider "what's the news" in the unit area. Wargame possible questions the reporters may ask, and identify appropriate answers to those questions. As time permits, conduct backbriefs, rehearsals, and murder boards of identified interviewees to prepare them for difficult issues.

When the media arrives, expedite their passage through any unit security procedures. Offer the proposed itinerary to the media and determine if they have any additional requests for information – these additional requests may cause adjustments to the itinerary.

At the end of the operation, report the results to higher headquarters. The report should consist of who the media was, what they asked, what the unit said, and a general impression of the overall result of the operation.

CONCLUSION

A unit cannot control the final product of an interview, which is the resulting news piece. It can affect its development, however, as everything the unit does with the media will positively or negatively influence the story. The unit with an effective Media Facilitation Plan can positively influence the reporter's story and win another battle in the information war.

[Media Facilitation Plan Worksheet Example](#)

[Media Facilitation Plan Worksheet Example \(Completed\)](#)

MEDIA FACILITATION PLAN WORKSHEET EXAMPLE

COMMANDER'S INTENT FOR INTERVIEW (THEMES TO STRESS)

DTG _____

HIGHER HQ PA REP _____

HIGHER HQ PA REP _____

REPORTERS EXPECTED

<u>NAME</u>	<u>NEWS AGENCY</u>	<u>STORYLINE</u>	<u>NOTES</u>	<u>NAME</u>	<u>NEWS AGENCY</u>	<u>STORYLINE</u>	<u>NOTE:</u>

PROPOSED ITINERARY

<u>TIME</u>	<u>EVENT/INTERVIEW</u>	<u>RESPONSIBLE PERSON</u>	<u>NOTES</u>

<u>INTERVIEWEE</u>	<u>PROPOSED INTERVIEWS</u>			<u>EVENT</u>	<u>PROPOSED VIDEO/PHOTOGRAPHY OPPORTUNITIE</u>		
	<u>THEMES TO STRESS</u>	<u>EVENTS TO DISCUSS</u>	<u>TIME/ LOCATION</u>		<u>THEMES STRESSED</u>	<u>TIME/ LOCATION</u>	<u>POC</u>

MEDIA FACILITATION PLAN WORKSHEET EXAMPLE

COMMANDER'S INTENT FOR INTERVIEW (THEMES TO STRESS)

1. Our battalion was invited to Cortina to support the legitimately elected government and protect the people of Cortina.
2. Our battalion is trained and ready to accomplish the mission.
3. Our battalion will accomplish its mission while taking all necessary steps to protect our soldiers.

DTG 04 1200 Nov 98

 HIGHER HQ PA REP ^{1st Bde S1} MAJ Anderson,
 HIGHER HQ PA REP ^{Division PAO} MAJ Summers, t

REPORTERS EXPECTED

NAME	NEWS AGENCY	STORYLINE	NOTES	NAME	NEWS AGENCY	STORYLINE	NOTE:
Bob Wagner	WNIN	Fratricides	Aggressive				
John LeBeau	WNIN Cameraman		Health Concern				
Susan Pryor	Woman's Way Magazine	Female Medic Spt	No mil exper				
Rick McCoy	ABC - Radio	Yesterday's action	Bosnia exper				

PROPOSED ITINERARY

TIME	EVENT/INTERVIEW	RESPONSIBLE PERSON	NOTES
05 1000-1010 Nov 98	Greet media at Bn TOC	BN S1	Review Ground Rules
05 1010-1015 Nov 98	Move to briefing tent	BN S1	Security Concern: anten
05 1015-1045 Nov 98	Interviews 1, 2, 3; Video Opportunity 1	Bn Cdr, HHC Cdr, Bn CA Tm Ldr	
05 1045-1055 Nov 98	Move to B Co Cmd Post	B Co XO	Spt Plt provide HMMWV
05 1055-1115 Nov 98	Interview 4, 5; Video Opportunity 2	B Co Cdr, 2nd Plt's Plt Sgt	B Co XO is B Co escort
05 1115-1130 Nov 98	Move to Battalion Aid Station	B Co XO	Turn over to BN Med Plt
05 1130-1145 Nov 98	Interview 6; Video Opportunity 3	BN Physician's Assistant	
05 1145-1200 Nov 98	Move to briefing tent, say goodbye	BN S1	Media Rpt to Bde by 160

PROPOSED INTERVIEWS				PROPOSED VIDEO/PHOTOGRAPHY OPPORTUNITIES			
INTERVIEWEE	THEMES TO STRESS	EVENTS TO DISCUSS	TIME/ LOCATION	EVENT	THEMES STRESSED	TIME/ LOCATION	POC
1. Bn Cdr, LTC Guthrie	1, 2, 3	Overview, recent action	05 1015, brief tent	1. CA Team rehearsals	1, 2, 3	05 1040, BN TOC	SGT Langl
2. HHC Cdr, CPT Braddock	2, 3	Support, ambush avoided	05 1025, brief tent	2. 2/B Co Plt operations	2, 3	05 1110, 2nd Plt area	SFC Creed
3. Bn CA, SGT Langkowski	1, 2	Work with town of Schpork	05 1035, brief tent	3. Med Plt, BAS operations	2, 3	05 1140, BAS	2LT Grey
4. B Co Cdr, CPT Bishop	2, 3	Yesterday's contact	05 1100, B Co CP				
5. 2/ b PLT SGT, SFC Creed	2, 3	Plt's involvement in contact	05 1110, B Co CP				
6. BN PA, 2LT Grev	2, 3	CASEVAC efforts	05 1135, BAS				