

VOLUME 1

PUBLIC AFFAIRS

SUMMARY OF VOLUME 1 CHANGES

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- (y) DoD Instruction 5040.07 CH 1, “Visual Information (VI) Productions,” April 22, 2020
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- (aa) DoD Directive 5500.07, “Standards of Conduct,” May 15, 2024
- (ab) Title 5 CFR
- (ac) The Joint Travel Regulations, “Uniformed Service Members and DoD Civilian Employees,” current edition
- (ad) MCO 3104.1B, “Marine Corps Combat Camera Program,” October 24, 2011
- (ae) NAVMC 3500.9C, “Communication Strategy and Operations Training and Readiness Manual,” November 1, 2018
- (af) MCO 12451.2D, “Honorary Awards for Civilian Employees,” November 7, 2016
- (ag) DoD Directive 3600.1 CH 1, “Information Operations (IO),” May 4, 2017
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- (ai) DoD Instruction 5400.14, “Procedures for Joint Public Affairs Operations,” November 3, 2014
- (aj) DoD Instruction 5400.13, “Public Affairs (PA) Operations,” October 15, 2008
- (ak) Joint Publication 3-61 CH 1, “Public Affairs,” August 19, 2016
- (al) 1913 Anti-Lobbying Act
- (am) Public Law 92-35, June 30, 1971
- (an) 10 U.S.C. § 503
- (ao) 18 U.S.C.

VOLUME 1: CHAPTER 1

“PUBLIC AFFAIRS FUNDAMENTALS”

SUMMARY OF SUBSTANTIVE CHANGES

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CHAPTER 1**PUBLIC AFFAIRS FUNDAMENTALS****0101 SCOPE**

This Order prescribes strategic policy, procedures, and responsibilities for managing the function of Public Affairs (PA) within the United States Marine Corps (USMC). The strategic goal of this Order is to ensure commanders enable USMC PA activities to communicate properly and effectively with external and internal audiences thus ensuring, at a minimum, the free flow of information required by United States (U.S.) law and the Department of Defense (DoD) principles of information.

0102 GENERAL

This Volume prescribes basic guidance and responsibilities for commanders and Communication Strategy and Operations (COMMSTRAT) Marines executing PA activities. COMMSTRAT executes the functional areas of PA and Combat Camera (COMCAM). This volume pertains to the PA function.

010201. Public Affairs in the Marine Corps

Due to the complex nature of the Information Environment (IE), the USMC will take proactive measures to inform global audiences, maintain trust, and provide context to USMC operations. USMC PA activities contribute to United States Government (USG) strategic communication and DoD objectives by communicating information about military activities to domestic, international, and internal audiences. A function of command, USMC PA activities include internal and external communication directed toward publics with an interest in the DoD according to the DoD principles of information. All USMC PA activities shall:

A. Be planned and executed only by COMMSTRAT personnel in support of operational plans and activities across the competition continuum. COMMSTRAT will coordinate and nest applicable communication plans with Higher Headquarters (HHQ) to ensure synchronization.

B. Provide accurate, timely, and truthful information to key publics who may affect the overall mission accomplishment of the USMC.

C. Increase global awareness, trust, and understanding of USMC missions by providing the necessary context to increase knowledge, affect attitudes and perceptions, and inspire behavior in support of approved USG and USMC communication objectives.

D. Ensure the USMC maintains its reputation as a respected professional organization, a responsible steward of resources, and a military service that contributes daily to national strategic and military objectives across the competition continuum while encouraging and enabling allies and partner nations.

E. Support command operations and ensure the trust and confidence of the U.S. population, allies and partners, and internal audiences to deter and dissuade adversaries; and to correct and counter misinformation, disinformation, and malinformation ensuring effective, culturally appropriate information delivery in regional languages.

F. Analyze and assess measures of performance and measures of effectiveness that will inform future plans and decision making.

G. Plan, source, and execute activities as part of daily operations. Planning and execution will be conducted through standard USMC, Naval, and joint planning processes and receive the commensurate level of senior-leader approval.

H. Integrate into joint and service exercises and training as appropriate.

I. Coordinate and synchronize with USMC information related capabilities (IRC), joint information operations (IO), and capabilities contributing to defense support to public diplomacy when applicable, to optimize effects and the achievement of DoD goals.

J. Coordinate and synchronize with USMC and external capabilities contributing to defense support to public diplomacy to optimize effects and the achievement of DoD goals.

K. Inform internal audiences about command operations to enhance institutional knowledge, and conduct regular training on the potential for personal actions in the information environment, to include on and off-duty actions on social media platforms, to receive national or international attention or reflect negatively on the Marine Corps.

010202. DoD Principles of Information

It is DoD policy to make available timely and accurate information so that the public, Congress, and news media may assess and understand the facts about national security and defense strategy. In carrying out DoD policy, the following principles of information shall apply to all USMC PA activities:

A. Information shall be made fully and readily available, consistent with statutory requirements, unless its release is precluded by national security constraints or valid statutory mandates or exceptions. The Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) will be supported in both letter and spirit in accordance with references (m) and (n).

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B. A free flow of general and military information shall be made available, without censorship or propaganda, to the American public, U.S. elected officials, and the men and women of the Armed Forces and their dependents.

C. Information will not be classified or otherwise withheld to protect the USG from criticism or embarrassment.

D. Information shall be withheld when disclosure would adversely affect national security, threaten the safety or privacy of USG personnel or their families, violate the privacy U.S. citizens, or be contrary to law, which includes actions that would compromise the integrity of ongoing investigations.

E. The DoD's obligation to provide the public with information on DoD major programs may require detailed PA planning and coordination in the DoD and with the other government agencies. Such activity is to expedite the flow of information to the public.

0103 COMMAND AND CONTROL

010301. Authority

U.S. law and DoD policy requires the USMC to communicate with domestic, international, and internal audiences. COMMSTRAT forces execute PA activities under the authority of the Secretary of the Navy (SECNAV), legally operating from within the United States and overseas, and may legally communicate with all audiences, whether foreign, domestic, friendly, neutral, or adversarial. COMMSTRAT quickly releases information and communication products when delegated release authority and operates throughout the commander's area of operations (AO), influence, and interest. COMMSTRAT's authority to engage and compete directly, daily, and globally with any audience makes it a versatile capability for commanders. Commanders should organize COMMSTRAT forces to optimize the execution of PA activities on behalf of their command while adhering to the contents of this Order.

010302. Public Affairs Chain of Authority

A. Department of the Navy (DON). The Secretary of the Navy (SECNAV) is responsible for establishing DON PA policy and directing its implementation. SECNAV monitors and controls Navy and USMC relationships with the Congress, Office of the Secretary of Defense (OSD), other principal government officials, and the public. Implementation of SECNAV policies is the responsibility of the Commandant of the Marine Corps (CMC) and other senior commanders who report directly to the Secretary. All USMC PA activities will comply with DON policy.

B. Chief of Information (CHINFO) and the Office of Information. CHINFO reports directly to SECNAV. As SECNAV's direct representative for PA, CHINFO is delegated the responsibility for coordinating, planning, and implementing PA policies and programs of the

Department. This includes exercising command of CHINFO field activities and providing direction to PA programs throughout DON. Functionally, CHINFO:

1. Acts as DON public spokesperson for the U.S. Navy in coordination with the Deputy CHINFO for Marine Corps Matters/ Director of Communication (DIRCOMM).
2. Advises SECNAV and Chief of Naval Operations (CNO) on matters of policy; the public's understanding of the Navy and USMC team; methods of information dissemination; means to increase public awareness; and DON PA aspects of operations, activities, and public events or incidents.
3. Coordinates, evaluates, and forwards to the Assistant to the Secretary of Defense, Public Affairs (ATSD (PA)) information of national or international interest concerning the DON for public release.
4. Provides public and internal information and engagement program policy guidance.
5. Develops DON policy proposals on requirements and applications of audiovisual resources and products for PA/VI purposes.

C. Headquarters Marine Corps (HQMC) Communication Directorate (CD) and DIRCOMM. The DIRCOMM leads HQMC (CD). In accordance with reference (a), DIRCOMM assumes the title of Deputy CHINFO for Marine Corps Matters and acts as the lead spokesperson for the USMC in coordination with CHINFO. The DIRCOMM also establishes and directs service-communication priorities, and is delegated responsibility for coordinating, planning, and implementing PA policies and programs within the USMC. Functionally, DIRCOMM:

1. Serves as the principal communication advisor to the CMC, Assistant Commandant of the Marine Corps (ACMC), HQMC staff, and Marine Corps activities worldwide by synchronizing Headquarters (HQ) and Fleet Marine Forces (FMF) communication assets.
2. Advises the OSD, Joint Staff, and DON leadership on the best use of USMC forces to conduct PA activities.
3. Leads PA operations within the HQMC staff.
4. Maintains overall responsibility for all publicly visible USMC official communication, to include official communication via HQMC flagship platforms, websites, and social media.
5. Responsible for policy governing all content on official publicly available Internet-based Capabilities per reference (b).

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6. Publishes a USMC communication strategy to inform the development and employment of subordinate command communication strategies and plans; synchronizes the USMC communication strategy with CHINFO and ATSD (PA); and distributes CHINFO and ATSD (PA) guidance to the field.

7. Ensures communication integration and synchronization of service-wide PA activities and programs and ensures appropriate USMC commands and IRCs within the HQ are aware of such efforts.

8. Conducts service-level research and analysis of the IE and key audiences to identify communication challenges and opportunities consistent with privacy and civil liberties law, policies, and guidelines.

9. Develops communication strategies and plans and provides communication input to service-level planning processes.

10. Conducts HQMC staff coordination and planning required to integrate and synchronize communication activities within HQMC and other USMC, joint, and interagency organizations.

11. Provides timely and accurate information to audiences regarding USMC programs, policies, plans, and operations consistent with security and privacy policies and guidelines.

12. Develops and executes service-level outreach and engagement programs to create relationships of mutual trust and understanding with the U.S. public, civic, and community organizations and leaders, as well as influential institutions.

13. Assesses the effectiveness of communication planning processes, efforts, and the impact of communication outputs through formal and informal methods.

14. Builds and maintains relationships with members of entertainment, media, academia, civic groups, and industry to achieve the communication objectives of the CMC.

15. Provides musical support for the President of the United States and the CMC.

16. Liaises with the national and international media industry to promote accuracy in news reporting across traditional media, social media, digital media, and international news networks.

17. Coordinates visits by foreign journalists and freelance writers with the Department of State Undersecretary for Public Diplomacy and Public Affairs for USG clearance and approval per reference (a), and notifies Information Intelligence Division (IID),

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Counterintelligence/Human Intelligence (M2X) Counterintelligence Coordinating Authority (CICA) for counterintelligence screening support.

18. Authors and manages USMC PA doctrine and policy.
19. Oversees the Honorary Marine program per reference (d).
20. Coordinates with HQMC Administration and Resource Management Division (AR) for policy development for print and reproduction per reference (e).
21. Responsible for approval and execution of all requests for support to entities from the entertainment, publishing, and advertising industries.
22. In conjunction with the Inspector General of the Marine Corps (IGMC), develops and maintains an Inspector General (IG) checklist for PA activities.
23. Manages the Visual Information & Excellence in Communication (VIEC) Awards program for the USMC on behalf of the DoD.
24. Serves as the 45XX and 55XX occupational field advocate per Title X responsibilities.

010303. Command-level Public Affairs

Subject to the direction of the senior authority, each officer who exercises command authority is responsible for the conduct of PA. The COMMSTRAT officer is the principal advisor to the officer in command for all PA matters. The senior COMMSTRAT Marine or official must have direct access to the commander to provide timely advice on PA matters that may affect the command and/or HHQ operations, narratives, or communication objectives. In accordance with reference (ak), Commands will organize COMMSTRAT sections to optimize their capabilities.

A. Commanders. All USMC commanders engaging in PA activities shall:

1. Include all PA considerations in the development of the Commander's Critical Information List (CCIL) within the operational security (OPSEC) working group.
2. Provide the resources required for COMMSTRAT to execute PA activities per references (a) – (ao) and the contents of this Order.
3. Provide the ability for unrestricted access to the internet to ensure PA support to external and community engagement.

4. Establish the COMMSTRAT Director as an assistant chief of staff on the primary staff or special staff, or a primary or special staff officer as directed in reference (ak).

5. Develop and deploy capabilities to assure trust and confidence of the U.S. public, allies, and partners, deter and dissuade adversaries, and counter misinformation and disinformation ensuring effective, culturally appropriate information delivery in regional languages.

6. Preclude the use of PA activities to engage in disinformation or deception or any other public-facing activity to mislead or deceive the U.S. public, including willfully misinforming the media about military capabilities and intentions in ways that could influence U.S. decision makers and public opinion.

7. If delegated, designate the COMMSTRAT officer or civilian-director equivalent as the command release authority in writing. This includes responsibility for management of public web content and social media. The COMMSTRAT officer or civilian-director equivalent will be the only individual delegated release authority in commands that have those individuals organic to the command.

8. Ensure the senior COMMSTRAT officer has access to the Commander, and a government mobile device. This includes priority access to satellite phones or other means of voice communication while conducting operations.

9. Provide requisite support for external media.

a. External media includes, but is not limited to, local news, national news, international news, bloggers, social media “influencers,” professional publications, documentary filmmakers, TV hosts, radio hosts, podcast hosts, and authors.

b. All media support must be coordinated with adjacent, higher, and subordinate commands. Inter-service, interagency, and allied support requests must receive approval at the appropriate joint-level of command. Media support will include review to ensure security requirements are met for necessary access. Hold harmless agreements will be given to media for signature.

c. Must provide berthing, transportation, communications, and messing for external media who desire to report on military operations on a reimbursable basis at the same level as that afforded to an officer in the grade of O4 and above per references (a) and (g) – (i).

d. Must provide external media access to all levels of command, to include embarkation on ship and attachment with ground or aviation forces.

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e. Must provide the point of contact information for the senior COMMSTRAT officer or civilian equivalent for planning and execution for embedded external media.

f. Must ensure security review is provided in the ground rules to include “security at the source” for designated escorts.

g. Must receive approval for external media embeds via the appropriate service component command or at the Marine Expeditionary Force-level of command. Requests to embed nationally and internationally known external media must receive approval via HQMC (CD).

h. Must provide assessments of external media to the Chief of Naval Information Media Operations and Planning via HQMC (CD) Operations Branch. Assessment information must include:

- (1) Name of command embedding external media,
- (2) Name and title of external media embed,
- (3) Date and location of embark ,
- (4) Scheme of maneuver for media embed,
- (5) Feedback and follow-on support requirements,
- (6) Expectations for external media products ,
- (7) Print and video clips if available , and
- (8) Lessons learned .

10. Must comply with HHQ directed or approved PA guidance.

11. Command newspapers, newsletters, and other publicly released information on paper-based products will adhere to regulations per references (a) and (j).

12. Ensure all command internal and external communication is coordinated and synchronized, to include oversight of internal communication to command family members between the COMMSTRAT officer and the Deployment Readiness Coordinator (DRC).

13. Establish a Unit Information Officer (UIO) program for subordinate commands, if applicable and authorized. Commands without assigned COMMSTRAT

personnel by Table of Organization (T/O) must assign an officer or civilian equivalent as the unit UIO. See Appendix A.

B. COMMSTRAT. All COMMSTRAT directors or senior officers, including civilian equivalent directors shall:

1. Coordinate all PA activities with higher, adjacent, and subordinate COMMSTRAT and/or PA staffs and organizations, as well as information-related staffs within joint, interagency, intergovernmental, and multi-national organizations when applicable. This includes maintaining contact with the next senior COMMSTRAT and/or PA staff about items with national/international interest as well as events with local media interest that may have impacts at higher levels.

2. Lead all PA activities within the command and advise the commander on all PA-related matters.

3. Ensure COMMSTRAT Marines maintain skill progression and skill enhancement sustainment intervals for Military Occupational Specialty (MOS) skills.

4. Oversee the UIO program – or any public communication and engagement – for subordinate commands, if applicable and authorized.

5. Provide media engagement training to personnel who engage with news media representatives.

6. Ensure all COMMSTRAT Marines receive training in copyright and licensing and all communication products adhere to applicable copyright laws.

7. Maintain letters of authorization concerning copyright material. COMMSTRAT is prohibited by law to copy, duplicate, or reproduce any item protected by copyright unless written permission of the copyright holder was obtained before copyrighted material may be used.

8. Develop proposed PA guidance (PPAG), staff it with relevant stakeholders, and submit to HHQ COMMSTRAT and/or PA for appropriate action per reference (k).

9. Develop and publish local command Standard Operating Procedures to address PA activities and operations not addressed in this Order.

10. Act as liaison for all media queries or embeds.

C. Contract COMMSTRAT Personnel. Contractors are not authorized to act as official USMC spokespersons, to include being interviewed as a subject matter expert (SME).

Contractors are not authorized to have release authority on behalf of a commander. Only government employees can serve as the authority for the release of information.

0104 RESTRICTIONS

PA activities foster a relationship of support and trust. PA activities by any means, (e.g., actions on social media platforms), will not be conducted with the intent to manipulate or deceive audiences and will be conducted in accordance with applicable U.S. law and policy.

VOLUME 1: CHAPTER 2

“RELEASE OF INFORMATION”

SUMMARY OF SUBSTANTIVE CHANGES

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CHAPTER 2**RELEASE OF INFORMATION****0201 RELEASE AUTHORITY**

Release authority is the level at which information can be released to the public without HHQ approval. Unless otherwise noted, O-6 level commands and above with an organic 4502 COMMSTRAT officer or 1035-series civilian equivalent have release authority for decisions, activities, policies, and operations wholly within the purview of that commander's authority. Release authority for commands participating in combatant command (CCMD)-directed operations, activities, or investments, with or without an organic COMMSTRAT officer, must be coordinated with the operational chain of command. O-5 level and below commands, whether they have a COMMSTRAT officer, CONUS or forward deployed, will not have release authority unless delegated in writing by a senior O-6 commander in that unit's chain of command. While communication is a commander's responsibility, release authority review is vital, as communication efforts may involve strategic risk that operational commands do not own and/or may result in service-level implications. O-6 level commanders and above may delegate command release authority to the command COMMSTRAT officer. The release authority reviews material prepared for public release to ensure it does not reveal classified information or controlled unclassified information, follows established public affairs guidance (PAG), and nests within HHQ communication plans. While other commands, including subordinate commands, and USG entities must be consulted when they are the originators of the information at issue, the release authority cannot avoid its responsibility to safeguard classified or sensitive unclassified information. All commanders shall ensure COMMSTRAT officers have adequate security clearance and access to policy and classified information to best advise the commander and to ensure PA activities serve the interests of the command and the USMC.

020101. Policy

Marine Corps policy for clearance of information for public release is that:

- A. The USMC abides by the DoD Principles of Information (See Chapter 1).
- B. Accurate and timely information is made available to the public and the Congress to help with analysis and understanding of USMC strategy, USMC policy, and USMC operations that affect national security.
- C. Any official USMC information intended for public release that pertains to military matters, national security issues, or subjects of significant concern to the USMC, DON, or DoD will be reviewed for clearance prior to release and will be consistent with established national, DoD, and DON policies and programs.

D. The public release of official USMC information is limited only as necessary to safeguard information requiring protection by law or in the interest of national security or other legitimate governmental interest.

E. Requests for information from organizations and individuals will be answered with accuracy and will not be classified or otherwise withheld to protect the USMC from criticism or embarrassment when the information itself is unclassified and releasable.

F. The USMC is required to abide by the Privacy Act, FOIA, and other applicable law and policy.

G. The credibility of official information must be maintained per reference (l) and this Order. The USMC will not alter official DoD imagery or manipulate official information for public release to misinform or deceive the U.S. public. Anything that weakens or casts doubt on the credibility of PA activities is unauthorized and not tolerated. Standard and digital photographic practices of limited cropping, resizing, dodging, or burning, balancing color, spotting, and adjusting contrast are not considered alteration. Cropping, editing, image enlargement or other actions that have the effect of misrepresenting the facts or circumstances of the event or object as originally recorded, however, are prohibited.

020102. PA versus “Press Agency”

Government organizations are prohibited from using appropriated funds to advertise, influence, or lobby the American public or members of Congress. The 1913 Anti-Lobbying Act reference (al)-prohibits expenditure of appropriated funds for publicity, (i.e., press agency), unless specifically authorized by Congress. This was reaffirmed in reference (am) [§ 608\(a\) of Public Law 92-351 \(July 13, 1972\)](#) which expressly prohibits government spending for “publicity or propaganda purposes designed to support or defeat legislation pending before Congress.”

There are certain authorized measures agencies may use to inform Congress, through official channels, of requests pertaining to current or future legislation affecting the efficient conduct of government business. These are typically conveyed by or through the Office of Legislative Affairs.

Instead of relying on press agency, the DON disseminates accurate, timely, and truthful information to help people develop their own viewpoints. The DON is prohibited, legally and ethically, from using disingenuous, dishonest, and undue influence to affect public opinion.

Marine Corps Recruiting Command (MCRC) is not exempt from the prohibition on press agency, however reference (an) § 503 authorizes MCRC to research, advertise and market to prospects and influencers in support of recruiting. Such actions do not constitute press agency.

0202 FREEDOM OF INFORMATION ACT (FOIA)

Refer to reference (n) for all DON FOIA requests and policy related to the Freedom of Information Act. A variety of conditions exempt the government from releasing information under FOIA. Most news media will not initially request information through FOIA, but instead will submit a request as a media query. COMMSTRAT must consider whether that information is releasable under FOIA. If there is any doubt, the COMMSTRAT officer will consult the command's FOIA authority. FOIA requests are for access to information that is already generated. The creation or generation of new information is not a response requirement to a FOIA request.

0203 PRIVACY ACT OF 1974

COMMSTRAT must abide by and advise the commander on matters pertaining to the Privacy Act of 1974 per reference (o). COMMSTRAT, in coordination with appropriate legal counsel and the privacy officer, must consider whether information is releasable under the Privacy Act.

0204 SECURITY AND POLICY REVIEW

All commanders will ensure COMMSTRAT officers have the adequate clearance and access to policy and classified information to best serve the government's interests. As a release authority, COMMSTRAT officers are responsible for reviewing material prepared for public release to ensure it reveals no classified information or controlled unclassified information. While other commands, including subordinate commands, and other USG entities must be consulted when they are the originators of the information at issue, the release authority cannot avoid its responsibility to safeguard classified or controlled unclassified information. Certain categories of official DoD information must be submitted for review and clearance, as described in the reference (q).

0205 TRADEMARK, LICENSING, AND INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY

Government insignia are protected by a variety of statutes and regulations and are also afforded protections by trademark law. In the case of the Marine Corps, reference (an) § 7881 offers specific protection to the Marine Corps Seal, emblem, name, and initials "U.S.M.C.," and requires written permission prior to the use of these brands on commercial products. In 2004, recognizing the value of armed service brands, Congress also authorized DoD agencies to license their trademarks for use on products, allowing that licensing royalties be used to cover program costs, as well as for morale, welfare, and recreation (MWR) activities for Marines (See reference (an) § 2260).

The Eagle, Globe, and Anchor (EGA) is the universally recognized symbol of the United States Marine Corps.

The EGA, seal, USMC initials, and name are the exclusive property of the United States Marine Corps. Permission to use them for commercial retail and advertising (free or paid) is required.

The use of Marine Corps trademarks for commercial purposes, including reproduction on merchandise, is expressly prohibited unless the producer completes a license agreement with the Marine Corps. Use is governed by the terms of the agreement.

020501. Marine Corps Trademarks

The EGA, seal, USMC initials, and name are the exclusive property of the United States Marine Corps. Other noteworthy trademarks include unit insignia, slogans such as: Semper Fi®, Semper Fidelis®, The Few. The Proud.®, Battles Won®, No Better Friend No Worse Enemy®, Earned Never Given®, First to Fight®, and many more. Permission to use USMC marks for commercial, retail, and advertising purposes is required. Permission for the commercial use of USMC insignia is given in the form of a Trademark License Agreement.

A. Use of the USMC Seal

Reproduction and use of the USMC seal, as designated in reference (c), is restricted to materials emanating from HQMC. Except for the manufacture of official letterhead and stationery and related items for official USMC use, reproduction and use of the USMC seal is prohibited per reference (f) § 765.14.

B. Right to Review

The USMC reserves the right to review, screen, or license any USMC-themed private-sector product or advertisement to ensure the proposed usage upholds the dignity and reputation of the USMC and to ensure such use does not subject the USMC to discredit or adversely affect the health, safety, welfare, or morale of members of the USMC, or is otherwise objectionable, per reference (s). The use of USMC trademarks by third parties for any purpose, including reproduction on merchandise, is expressly prohibited unless the producer enters into a license agreement with, or is otherwise granted permission by, the USMC. Use is governed by the terms of the Trademark License Agreement.

C. Implied Endorsement

Except for trademark licenses or other grants of permission, DoD and USMC policy and regulations prohibit DoD employees from use of official USMC markings and symbols in ways that imply endorsement of a commercial entity or activity. (See reference (aa) § 2635.702 and reference (ab))

D. USMC Office of Primary Responsibility

Per Chief of Naval Research delegation through the CMC, the organization responsible for administering permission to use USMC trademarks is the Counsel for the Commandant (CL) via the USMC Trademark Licensing Office. The contact information for the USMC Trademark and Licensing Office is:

Marine Corps Trademark Licensing Office
Headquarters United States Marine Corps
925 Corporate Drive, Ste 208
Stafford, Virginia, 22554
Main Line: 703-784-6887
E-mail: trademark_licensing@usmc.mil
Website: www.hqmc.marines.mil/trademark

0206 OPERATIONS SECURITY

PA activities play a vital role in building understanding, trust, and relationships with domestic and international publics critical to mission success. COMMSTRAT personnel are among the first points of contact with respect to public information. COMMSTRAT personnel have unique knowledge of HHQ official PA guidance and are integrated into HHQ, adjacent, and subordinate public communication efforts. COMMSTRAT personnel will be included in the OPSEC planning process to ensure PA considerations are addressed and that critical information is safeguarded. OPSEC must be considered before, during, and after all PA activities to ensure public information does not create OPSEC vulnerabilities or provide critical or sensitive information for adversaries. That said, the need for OPSEC will never be used as an excuse to deny non-critical information to the public per reference (b).

020601. Commanders Critical Information and Indicators

Commands must share the Critical Information and Indicators List (CIIL) with COMMSTRAT officers to prevent inadvertent disclosure of this information via activities. If the CIIL is classified, it will be provided only to personnel with the appropriate security clearance and access.

020602. Training

In addition to annual OPSEC training, COMMSTRAT officers and staff non-commissioned officers (SNCO) must also complete all training found in reference (t).

020603. Command Biographies

Unclassified, publicly available websites and online biographies shall not identify family members of USMC personnel (military or civilian) in any way, except when cleared for release and published by authorized COMMSTRAT personnel, or the spouses of senior leadership who are participating in public events such as ship naming, commissioning, etc.

020604. Departure and Return Dates

COMMSTRAT officers will coordinate directly with numbered fleet of task force PA for details regarding confirmation of ships and aircraft plainly visible to the public, ship and unit departures and arrivals, and guidelines for the release of departure and return dates for deploying forces.

0207 INFORMATION RELEASE GUIDELINES

The protection of sensitive and classified information is paramount when preparing information for public release. Different categories of information hold unique release guidelines that must be strictly followed.

020701. Generally Releasable Information

The following information is generally releasable:

- A. Approximate size of friendly forces embarked aboard ships and aircraft (exact numbers of forces or complete lists of units will not be provided).
- B. Casualty figures aboard the embarked vessel or aircraft. Names will be released via appropriate DoD policy.
- C. Results of completed missions.
- D. Types and general amounts of ordnance expended (e.g., more than 25,000 pounds of high-explosive ordnance dropped from air wing).
- E. Number of aerial combat missions flown in the area of operations.

020702. Generally Unreleasable Information

The following information is generally not releasable unless declared otherwise by applicable PAG or higher operational authority, or declassified for public release:

- A. Future plans or operations.
- B. Detailed information about vulnerabilities or weaknesses.
- C. Rules of engagement.
- D. Security measures, force protection, or deceptive actions used as part of the operation.
- E. Intelligence collection activities (past and present), including intelligence methods, targets, and results.

- F. Information about downed aircraft or ships while search and rescue operations are being planned or in progress unless clearly in plain sight of public.
 - G. Specific types of ordnance expended, and (in some cases) the methods. HHQ will provide amplifying guidance.
 - H. Location and activities of special operations forces.
 - I. Details of active law enforcement and administrative investigations.
 - J. Specific tactics, techniques, and procedures.
020703. Security at the Source

The protection of sensitive and classified information is paramount when preparing information for public release. This principle also extends to visitors; uncleared persons should not gain access to classified information and spaces that may have classified information displayed or easily accessible must be sanitized prior to entry. Security of classified information and material is the responsibility of every individual within the USMC. The person communicating, whether in a media interview, in a speech, in a social media post, blog, or in any other means of electronic or verbal communication manner, is responsible for protecting classified information from unauthorized disclosure.

020704. Release of Sensitive Information

In rare and extreme circumstances, rapidly perishable sensitive information may be given to members of the media, such as when embedded with USMC units and it supports the safety of the media member and/or provides appropriate context to follow-on reporting. The media may receive sensitive information on an impending operation in which they will be participating if they agree to withhold publication until authorized by a senior military or specifically designated authority. In all cases, specific approval must be given by the appropriate authority with cognizance over the operation or activity.

020705. Release of Classified Information

Classified information must be reviewed by an officially designated security review analyst, or an original classification authority subject authority for declassification and approval for public release.

020706. Actions in Case of Inadvertent Disclosure of Classified Information

If classified information is inadvertently disclosed to uncleared media representatives, the command security manager shall be notified immediately. The security manager will in turn notify his or her immediate chain of command, then Director, Naval Criminal Investigative Service (NCIS). Actions to address possible compromise must be immediate and fair. These actions may include:

A. Reviewing the media's visual or written record of the information to make a preliminary determination whether the information was compromised.

B. Notifying the media member that they were inadvertently provided classified information and respectfully request they delete the material, surrender the specific information in their notes, or otherwise relinquish any record of the classified information.

C. Contacting the media member's superior(s), if the media member refuses to turn over the information, and requesting the action described in the paragraph above.

D. If necessary, seizing any record of the information in the media member's possession, deleting the classified information, and returning any unclassified information remaining. In no instance will material be confiscated by a command without prior approval from HQMC (CD), CHINFO, and OATSD (PA).

E. Once information is confirmed as compromised, coordinating with the command security officer to determine if further contact with the media member is advisable, so as not to draw attention to the information.

020707. Protection of Classified Material

A. Accidents on a Military Installation. If classified material is exposed at an accident site, the command shall remove it or otherwise protect classified material from view consistent with the need to preserve the integrity of a site for accident investigators. After rescue and damage control, the command shall: protect classified material from further unauthorized disclosure; preserve the site for investigation; and meet the need of the public for information. If the material cannot be removed from the site (e.g., for sole purpose of the investigation), the command should attempt to prevent disclosure by obstructing unauthorized viewing of the classified material. Opportunities to cover the accident scene shall not normally be granted to news media until the classified material is removed, covered, or otherwise officially secured.

B. Accidents Outside Military Jurisdiction. In the civilian domain, preventing news media access to an accident site to prevent compromise of classified material is far more difficult. The actions prescribed above apply, however, the military may not restrain or prevent media from covering a newsworthy event in the public domain and outside military jurisdiction, unless martial law has been declared or a national defense area has been established.

020708. Security Review of News Media Information

A. New electronic formats for still and video photography make on-site security review more feasible than in the past. If compromise of classified material is suspected, this procedure allows the commander to protect the classified information and material while at the same time meeting the needs of reporters on deadline.

B. In some cases, personnel or compatible equipment will not be readily available to conduct an on-site security review to determine positively and promptly that classified material has been inadvertently exposed. When a security review is warranted and shipping material to another activity for processing and security review is necessary, the following steps shall be taken.

1. If, based on best information available, it is probable that classified material has been exposed to news media, commanders will work with their security manager to prevent additional spillage in accordance with operational security requirements and work with news media representatives to reclaim any photographic media (digital, video, or film) suspected of containing classified material.

2. The COMMSTRAT Marine(s) on-site should make clear to affected reporters that the command has no wish to restrain news coverage and is interested only in retrieving any classified information that may have been inadvertently disclosed and/or obtained.

3. Commands shall make a telephonic report of the circumstances (including names of correspondents and their news agency) to the senior COMMSTRAT officer in their chain of command and via email to ontherecord@usmc.mil for coordination. This report should be followed up by an immediate precedence message. The telephone report and message should be provided to other superiors in the chain for information.

4. The COMMSTRAT office must contact the media representative's superiors (i.e., station managers, editors, etc.) to explain the situation and request cooperation. The COMMSTRAT officer must advise that publication or airing of classified information (or refusal to surrender it to the military authority) is a violation of federal law.

5. The COMMSTRAT officer will assure media leaders that the command's interest lies solely in protecting classified material and that all cleared material shall be returned to the correspondent with minimal delay. The command may offer a new photographic or video opportunity at the accident scene.

6. If seat-of-government level review is required, the command will expeditiously forward the material directly to HQMC (CD), which will coordinate with Director, NCIS and other officials as appropriate.

C. The COMMSTRAT Marine(s) conducting security review, especially those on-site when such a capability exists, should understand that the intent of security review is only to determine the presence of classified material, and is not an opportunity to identify and remove critical, derogatory, or embarrassing material.

020709. Medical Matters

A. The personal privacy rights of those receiving medical care will be observed as a matter of law and policy. Release of certain information without consent of the patient or patient representative is considered a crime under various Federal laws, such as the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA) and the Privacy Act information source determines which law is applicable. Information provided by a "covered entity," (e.g., a medical professional), would fall under HIPAA. Information from commanders or other non-medical personnel would fall under the Privacy Act. COMMSTRAT officers must discuss the release of medical information with command legal representatives, the staff judge advocate (SJA), and/or Office of the General Counsel (OGC) legal advisor and facility privacy officer in advance to ensure HIPAA and other applicable requirements are met in each circumstance.

B. Authorizations for release on behalf of minors may be signed by an appropriate legal representative, parent, or guardian of a minor, but should be reviewed by a command's servicing legal office and/or privacy officer.

020710. Casualties

COMMSTRAT officers will work directly with casualty assistance call officers to ensure that no casualty information on deceased military or DoD civilian personnel is released to the media or the general public until 24 hours after notifying the Primary Next of Kin (PNOK) regarding the casualty status of the member consistent with reference (p). All COMMSTRAT officers must be familiar with reference (u) to ensure casualty notification is understood and conducted appropriately.

020711. Investigations

The substance, details, or preliminary findings of ongoing investigations may not be publicly disclosed unless the proper authority authorizes disclosure. Not all findings will always be determined releasable, even when an investigation is complete. COMMSTRAT officers will not make public statements about investigations that imply that findings will be disclosed. Imagery of an event may be eligible for release even if attached to a legal or safety investigation; however, its release must be approved by DIRCOMM, as appropriate. Categorizing imagery as part of an investigation is not an exemption. Official video or still photography of accidents or incidents may be immediately releasable if judged in the interest of the USMC and the public. DIRCOMM is the final release authority.

020712. Proprietary Information

The USMC is responsible for protecting USMC and DON information derived from proprietary data of a private party per the reference (ao) § 1905, "Trade Secrets Act," and other laws. Such information must be withheld from public release when it is in the USMC's control and is not otherwise releasable.

020713. Congressional Inquiries

Because most media inquiries parallel the concerns and interests of members of Congress, COMMSTRAT officers need to understand the congressional issues that drive media interest to best advise commanders and staffs. COMMSTRAT officers also need to understand the extent of influence by media publications on both government officials and their constituents. Congressional committees may request information directly from a USMC command or HQMC. The COMMSTRAT director will work with the command to respond under the following conditions and within the following parameters in accordance with reference (r):

A. If a command is in routine contact with a congressional delegation and if the information requested is of routine nature and of negligible national, DON, or USMC-wide impact, the command may respond to the inquiry without resort to higher authority.

B. Congressional inquiries will be answered in a timely and professional manner: a full reply within 10 working days, or an interim reply within five (5) working days.

C. Commands will reply directly on all routine and non-policy matters and will send copies of both incoming and outgoing correspondence to the command legal officer, SJA, HQMC (CD), and Office of Legislative Affairs (OLA).

D. As a matter of protocol, members of Congress should receive the information before it is released to the media or the public, unless instructed otherwise by HQMC (CD) or OLA.

E. When the subject matter of a news release is of interest to a member of Congress, the command will forward copies of the release to HQMC (CD) for release to interested members and to other members or committees, as appropriate. A command will consult HQMC (CD) and OLA for guidance in handling a request for information if:

1. The command has no routine contact with the member of Congress, staff member, or other official making the request.
2. The request is unusual or extraordinary.
3. The request has potential for wider impact beyond the local level.

020714. Nuclear Equipment, Weapons, Accidents, and Incidents

Information regarding nuclear equipment, weapons, accidents, or incidents is likely to have public interest. Release of such information will be coordinated with the operational chain of command and HQMC (CD), in order to ensure proper coordination with CCMDs (if overseas), CHINFO, and ATSD (PA).

VOLUME 1: CHAPTER 3

“EXTERNAL COMMUNICATION”

SUMMARY OF SUBSTANTIVE CHANGES

Hyperlinks are denoted by ***bold, italic, blue and underlined font.***

The original publication date of this Marine Corps Order (MCO) Volume (right header) will not change unless/until a full revision of the MCO has been conducted.

All Volume changes denoted in **blue font** will reset to black font upon a full revision of this Volume.

CHAPTER VERSION	PAGE PARAGRAPH	SUMMARY OF SUBSTANTIVE CHANGES	DATE OF CHANGE

CHAPTER 3

EXTERNAL COMMUNICATION

0301 GENERAL

Well-planned and executed external communication supports the commander's intent, provides context for accurate media reporting, and ultimately leads to increased public support and understanding of the USMC globally. Such actions benefit the USMC operating environment and institutional reputation by way of greater trust and understanding from global audiences. Commanders should leverage all available authorized communication mediums, to include public speaking events. Public awareness, understanding, and support is impacted positively by providing context through narratives. This may be achieved through highlighting contributions and achievements of subordinates and encouraging Marines to share their Marine Corps stories regularly and consistently via COMMSTRAT.

0302 METHOD

External communication increases public awareness and understanding of the USMC through the timely and accurate release of information regarding USMC programs, policies, plans, and operations. COMMSTRAT will advise commanders and provide subject matter expertise in support of public release of other information activity actions and engagements, including civil affairs, civil military operations, key leader engagements, and battle damage assessments. HQMC (CD) will release the Marine Corps service-wide communication strategy and is the coordinating authority for the development of communication campaign plans and public engagement tactics in support of the service communication strategy. As the coordinating authority, HQMC (CD) will work with commands and agencies with Marine Corps equities as required. HQMC (CD) will maintain awareness of adjacent service-level information activities, to include influence occupational specialties.

030201. External Communication Objectives

External communication will be employed by COMMSTRAT to achieve a variety of objectives, which includes but is not limited to:

- A. Engagement with key publics to affect changes in knowledge, attitudes, and/or behaviors in support of USMC and command objectives.
- B. Increase global public awareness and understanding of the USMC through the proactive dissemination of accurate, truthful, and timely information and community relations activities.
- C. Inform publics and stakeholders about new or updated policies with wide-ranging impacts and support service communication objectives.

D. Provide support to USMC recruiting initiatives and campaigns.

E. Inform key publics about USMC history and traditions through the observance of USMC historical events, traditions, and days of national significance.

0303 CRISIS COMMUNICATION

Any sudden, unpredictable incident or situation involving a threat to USMC forces or that may negatively impact USMC missions, relationships, and reputation with key publics is considered a crisis. Crisis situations develop rapidly and can affect long-term public opinion and trust in an organization. During crisis situations, the USMC must communicate timely information proactively to the maximum extent possible given OPSEC and investigative considerations. The commander is ultimately responsible for crisis communication, however, the command's COMMSTRAT director is the commander's SME for crisis communication planning and execution and will lead staff crisis communication efforts. COMMSTRAT and the SJA must work closely during crisis communication efforts to determine the legality of releasing information during the crisis. If the crisis involves a felony crime, coordination for any investigative-type release of information must be coordinated with HQMC (CD) and NCIS or appropriate law enforcement agency. Commands must consider whether a public statement to address immediate public safety concerns is appropriate.

0304 COMMAND NARRATIVE

COMMSTRAT personnel will lead development of a command narrative in coordination with the rest of the staff and will periodically assess if a command's established narrative needs to be updated to ensure continued alignment with the service. A command narrative explains the purpose and intent of the unit's posture and presence over the duration of the unit's mission. A command narrative is intended to be credible, logical, and emotionally relevant to audiences and stakeholders, and designed to synchronize the words, deeds, and image of the command's interaction with the operating environment. Command narratives are implemented by commands throughout the FMF and Supporting Establishment (SE) and are nested under the USMC communication strategy. They enable the achievement and maintenance of communication objectives by integrating and aligning activities of sufficient scope, scale, simultaneity, and duration across the USMC to ensure the service communicates as "one voice" regardless of subordinate commanders' individual communication objectives. Command narratives are planned and integrated among staff elements and service components within a joint command, among different CCMDs, and across the DoD, while also aligning with interagency, inter-organizational and multi-national partners.

0305 MEDIA OPERATIONS

030501. General

Engaging local, regional, and national media is a primary means of projecting information about USMC operations and activities due to the audience reach of established

media outlets. Commanders are required to take a proactive posture to build and maintain key relationships between their units and all levels of the media as appropriate. Relationships with credible, credentialed media members have proven to support accomplishment of commanders' objectives, establish trust with the public, and reduce misinformation, disinformation, and malinformation. Commanders will prepare for potential media interest in all command programs, plans, and actions. COMMSTRAT is responsible for developing a plan to credential and manage external media in support of USMC events.

030502. Release of Information to the Media

Commands will release information to the media as candidly and as rapidly as the situation and issue permit, while duly considering security, accuracy, propriety, and privacy. Commands must make every effort to mitigate potential misinformation, disinformation, or malinformation by releasing information that provides proper context to an event. Although media deadlines challenge the command's ability to respond comprehensively, commanders must release the best information available by the media deadline and prepare to provide more information as warranted to ensure an accurate portrayal of the issue. It is important to be fully transparent with the media and inform them that more information may be forthcoming while providing reasons for any delay, (e.g., withholding names of casualties due to DoD policy that names must be withheld until 24 hours after verified notification of next of kin). Commanders will not delay or reduce disclosure of information based on its unfavorable or embarrassing nature.

030503. Coordination

When dealing with the media, commands must abide by release authority constraints (see chapter 2 of this volume). Unless previously coordinated through PAG or other official correspondence, commands will coordinate information of national or international consequence with the chain of command, higher headquarters COMMSTRAT/PA and HQMC (CD).

030504. Media Representative Engagement

A media representative is any individual employed by a media organization to gather and report on a newsworthy event. Given the capabilities of the internet, USMC commands will also treat individuals who gather and publish news by non-traditional means, such as bloggers and other internet-based media, as media representatives if their activities are consistent with the relationships across external information organizations and representatives. Engagement with non-traditional media representatives will abide by release authority and coordination requirements.

030505. Foreign Media based in the United States

Assistance to foreign correspondents based in the United States and listed by the U.S. State Department's Foreign Press Center shall be provided in the same manner as to a U.S. media representative following current directives. Routine assistance to nominal requests for

releasable material may be provided to all media representatives if deemed in the best interest of the USMC.

030506. Media Embeds and Media Visits

A “media embed” is when a media representative is officially authorized to accompany a military unit for an extended period, often without an established duration, and exists when media closely cover ongoing operations, activities, or investments (OAI). A “media visit” is when one or more media representatives are with a unit for a short duration, usually with a firm definition of length. COMMSTRAT personnel will escort media during media visits, while embeds will take part in unit functions without direct COMMSTRAT supervision. Media representatives will be given broad access to USMC commands and personnel, which may include embarkation aboard ships and aircraft. When media representatives embed with units, the COMMSTRAT officer or UIO will be the primary point of contact. If the unit is without COMMSTRAT personnel, the command must appoint a UIO to serve as a primary point of contact within the designated unit to facilitate planning and execution of the embed and ensure PA policy is followed. More information on the UIO process is available in Appendix A.

030507. Media Embed Essential Considerations

Several planning factors impact the success or failure of a media embed. COMMSTRAT personnel will work with commanders and staff to ensure the below considerations are accounted for when establishing a media embed:

A. Access. Commanders at all levels will provide media representatives with access to forces under their command. Commanders will ensure the media are given the opportunity to observe actual operations, including mission preparation and debriefing, whenever possible. The personal safety of media representatives is not a blanket reason for exclusion.

B. Ground Rules. Specific ground rules will be established and thoroughly understood by both the media and the unit. Hold harmless agreements will be given to media for signature.

C. Security. COMMSTRAT personnel must be particularly aware of the need to balance media access with OPSEC in accordance with reference (t). Media may require a background check dependent on the sensitivity of the subject matter under consideration for coverage.

D. Logistical Support. Units should plan lift and logistical support on a non-interference basis in accordance with references (h) and (i) and with governing CCMD or Service policies to assist in moving media personnel to and from the battlefield and supporting them while in the area of responsibility (AOR).

E. Access to Communications. Media representatives will generally file their products via self-contained or commercial communications facilities. When commercial

facilities are not available or feasible, commanders will provide media with communications support via military communications systems. While this should not come at the expense of critical military communications, commanders must give every consideration to allowing timely transmission of media products. Communication restrictions, including signature management, if required, must be included in the media ground rules.

F. Transportation. Transportation assets for media representatives and media equipment during the embed will be coordinated to support maximum coverage of the operation, to include support for media representatives embedded while units deploy to the AOR. Use of priority inter-theater airlift for embedded media to cover stories, as well as to file stories, is highly encouraged. Seats aboard vehicles, aircraft, and ships will be made available to allow maximum coverage of U.S. forces. Coordinating and demonstrating media transportation in and out of the AOR is the responsibility of the embedding unit, and will be accomplished on a space available, no-additional-cost-to-government basis except where authorized by reference (h). Media representatives are responsible for loading and carrying their own equipment at all times. Only ATSD (PA) has the authority to approve PA travel arranged by the Navy or USMC in conjunction with another Federal department or agency or with a foreign government. ATSD (PA) may delegate this authority to help expedite the approval of media requests for embarks, especially during ongoing operations.

G. Travel Orders. Hosting units may issue no-cost invitational travel orders for media when necessary in accordance with reference (ac).

H. Berthing and Messing. Basic services, such as messing, will be provided to media representatives on a reimbursable basis. Media representatives will be granted the privileges of an officer in the grade of O4 or above for messing, transportation, and billeting when such accommodations are conveniently available. For example, media representatives aboard ships will be afforded the opportunity to eat in the wardroom and billet in a stateroom when possible.

I. Passports and Visas. Media are responsible for obtaining their own passports and visas, when required. Commands must respect local regulations in any circumstance in which countries are unwilling to grant access and/or may place restrictions on the number of media representatives and their freedom of movement. Contact the appropriate legal office for additional assistance.

J. Termination. A media organization may terminate an embed at any time. Unit commanders will provide, as the situation permits and based on availability, military transportation for reporters to the nearest source of commercial transportation. Once the media terminates the embed, there is no guarantee it can embed again with the same unit.

K. Feedback. Upon completion of a media embed or visit, commands will provide feedback to the HHQ, COMMSTRAT, and/or PA chain of command. Media embeds or visits that may attract national or international attention will be synchronized and coordinated

with HQMC (CD) Operations Branch at the conclusion and/or during any appropriate stage of the embed or visit.

030508. Escorting Media

When conducting a media visit, a COMMSTRAT officer, COMMSTRAT chief, or General Schedule (GS) civilian equivalent will be assigned as the media escort. The escort's proximity to the media representative will be based on the circumstances of the visit, as determined by the unit commander. The escort will:

- A. Be the media representative's primary informational resource for execution of the visit.
- B. Coordinate to ensure the media representative has access to unit personnel and spaces.
- C. Ensure media adheres to established ground rules.
- D. Ensure the protection of sensitive and classified material and information, (i.e., security at the source).
- E. Ensure the media representative is familiar with safety requirements.

0306 EXTERNAL OFFICIAL PRESENCES (EOP)

External official presences (EOP) include official USMC websites, authorized USMC social media pages, and other external public communication platforms on the Internet. Information residing on an official USMC digital platform is interpreted by the worldwide public as reflecting USMC policies or positions. Therefore, all information presented must be in compliance with this Order and DoD and DON policy. More information on EOPs and social media platforms can be found in Volume 6, "Command Social Media."

030601. Guidelines

A. Due to the longevity of content and the ability of websites to store credible information and be easily searched, websites will be the primary source of digital engagement efforts, supported by social media content. Posting to social media with links to unit websites lends posts more credibility. Official command social media presences must maintain a link to a unit's official website.

B. Due to the open-source nature of the internet and the associated risks to privacy and personal data security, EOPs will only post the amount of information necessary to meet the intent of the communication objective. EOPs are prohibited from identifying family members of command personnel by name, including in imagery captions, except for the spouses of leadership who are participating in high-profile public events that contain external media

coverage, (e.g., ship naming ceremonies, commemoration of new facilities). Family member information will not be included in any online biographies.

C. The names, telephone numbers, and official e-mail addresses of command support staff or faculty who maintain relationships with external entities may be included on EOPs. While COMMSTRAT personnel will establish and maintain an organizational mailbox to prevent personal information on EOPs, COMMSTRAT officers are authorized, and encouraged, to make their contact information accessible to media representatives and external entities.

D. Official portraits are required on EOPs. They will remain restricted to the command or institution's senior leadership and will display the head and shoulders only. Official portraits must be appropriate resolution for the web so as not to unnecessarily slow down web page performance.

E. Biographies of General and flag officers, commanding officers, executive officers or deputies, the civilian equivalents of those officers just listed, and senior enlisted leaders will be posted to EOPs where possible by platform, or a link to the biography on a USMC official webpage. In the event a senior leader is relieved, the biography and photograph of that leader will be removed from EOPs and USMC official websites immediately.

F. Due to the unique nature of the U.S. Navy and USMC Bands, their component units, and fleet bands, the posting of portraits and biographies of the command or unit members is permitted, provided such biographies are head-and-shoulders portraits with appropriate resolution.

G. It is USMC policy that all USMC official web pages must use the marines.mil domain with the following exceptions:

1. USMC University official web pages may reside in the .edu domain.
2. Websites for USMC recruiting may reside in the .com domain.
3. Electronic commerce websites operated for the USMC may reside in the .com domain.

H. All USMC websites must include:

1. Accessibility for all U.S. citizens, to include persons with disabilities.
2. Full organizational name and official postal mailing address.
3. A statement that the site is an official USMC website and a link to the USMC's official website <https://www.marines.mil>.

4. Links to requirements per references (a) and (v) and the following:

a. The parent command, or immediate superior in command, homepage where applicable.

b. MCRC site at <https://www.marines.com>.

c. USMC official FOIA Website at <https://www.hqmc.marines.mil/Agencies/USMC-FOIA/>.

d. The Veterans Crisis Line website, to provide Veterans, service members, National Guard and Reserve members, and those who support them with resources in their time of need.

e. An electronic reading room that contains documents most frequently requested by FOIA.

I. Official websites must not contain any written information or display any logo indicating the site is best viewed with any specific internet browser(s); or that the site has been selected as a recommended or featured site by any organization; or point to any particular search engines or recommend any commercial software. Sites developed and/or maintained by contractors may not include the contractor's name nor may they link to the contractor's website, either in the normal view of the page or in any source code.

J. Official websites will not provide commercial software or links to commercial software except in those cases where the software is unique and required for viewing documents provided within the site's purpose. In these cases, only a text link directly to the vendors' download page is permitted. The use of corporate logos is prohibited.

K. Links from official websites to a command's presence on a social networking service are permitted and may be indicated using social networking service logo icons. However, the link must be clearly identified as a link to the command's presence. Command websites may display the logo of a social networking service only if linking directly to the command's presence on that service and the command's presence is registered with the Marine Corps' social media registry located at: [Social Media \(marines.mil\)](https://www.marines.mil/SocialMedia).

L. Official websites will not display logos or graphics for events, issues, or commemorations unless that event, issue, or commemoration is command sponsored (i.e., a command event), or is approved by Secretary of Defense (SECDEF) or SECNAV. Examples of approved events, issues, or commemorations that are national in scope include, but are not limited to, Navy or Marine Corps birthdays, Prisoner of War (POW)/Missing in Action (MIA) Day, and Federal secular holidays.

M. Websites will not display any commercial page counters.

O. Official websites may link to federally chartered, military-related organizations. Commands desiring to link to military-related organizations' websites will do so only by linking to the appropriate pages on the USMC official website.

P. Links to appropriate private sector non-commercial sites by the Bureau of Medicine, the Chief of Chaplains, or DON institutions of higher education, may be made for purposes of additional educational resources, provided those links support the command's core mission and avoid the appearance of official endorsement.

Q. As part of the command's family support function, installation websites may link to local chambers of commerce (or overseas equivalents) and official government agencies. Tenant commands will link to the installation website to provide access to these external links.

R. Links to weather services may only be made to the appropriate government meteorology and oceanography centers or to the National Weather Service (NWS) of the National Oceanographic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA).

S. Ensure sharing of commercial news articles and content on official digital engagement platforms does not endorse the commercial news organization (soliciting the audience to follow, like, or subscribe is considered an endorsement). Shared posts must represent credible information. Commands must avoid the appearance of preferring some news networks over others. Commands will use an "all or none" approach when liking, following, and/or sharing content from regional and local news organizations.

T. Digital engagement shall not provide links to content beyond the established access point to restricted sites, so as to not reveal the internal structure.

U. Sites using frames will not link to any external content within the window of a frame nor will any website prohibit -- through the use of coding -- the visitor to return to a previously visited website (i.e., curtailing the use of the —back button on the browser).

V. No materials or services may be advertised for sale or be sold via a command website. This includes command memorabilia, apparel, etc.

W. Marine Corps Community Services (MCCS) activities are an integral part of nearly every installation and therefore must have a presence on the installation's website. This presence shall only contain general information regarding the installation MWR and MCCS programs such as patron eligibility, services offered, location of offices, telephone numbers, and hours of operation. Commercial sponsorship or advertisements shall not be displayed on publicly accessible MCCS web presences.

X. Websites will not display the locations of operational commands or force protection facilities on installation maps. The location of medical, retail, personnel support, and

recreation facilities are permitted. The use or copying of commercial and or copyrighted maps is prohibited.

Y. Where the mission of the command includes an educational mission and unclassified dissertations or professional papers may be published to the web for the purpose of peer review, the following disclaimer for exchange of professional information and ideas among scientists, physicians, or educators, must be displayed: “Material contained herein is made available for the purpose of peer review and discussion and does not necessarily reflect the views of the Department of the Navy or the Department of Defense.”

Z. Content on digital engagement platforms shall also not contain and shall prohibit the below content:

1. Advertising, promotions, solicitations, or endorsements of products, non-government services, or of a political nature.

2. Personal attacks, vulgar, hateful, violent, or racist language, slurs, stereotyping, hate speech, and other forms of discrimination based on any race, color, religion, national origin, disability, or sexual orientation.

3. Information that may engender threats to the security of Navy and USMC operations or assets, or to the safety of DON personnel and their families.

4. Information that is under copyright or trademark, without permission of the holder and/or review provided by the USMC Trademark Counsel (in instances where no permission is deemed to be required, (e.g., when it is a “fair use”)).

5. Material that is political in nature or that endorses or promotes products, opinions, or causes other than those already officially endorsed by DON.

6. Links to commercial content which may imply endorsement. These links include those to commercial entities, charities or causes. Links to the Combined Federal Campaign (CFC) and or the Navy-Marine Corps Relief Society (NMCRS) are permitted and encouraged.

AA. All authorized social media channels have clear community guidelines that include:

1. Privacy and security disclaimers.

2. Copyright and trademark disclaimers (to be created in conjunction with the USMC’s Trademark Counsel and/or Trademark Licensing Office).

3. Moderated account disclaimer.

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4. FOIA notice.

5. Contact information, which must be a valid organizational .mil or .gov email address.

VOLUME 1: CHAPTER 4

“INTERNAL COMMUNICATION”

SUMMARY OF SUBSTANTIVE CHANGES

Hyperlinks are denoted by *bold, italic, blue and underlined font*.

The original publication date of this Marine Corps Order (MCO) Volume (right header) will not change unless/until a full revision of the MCO has been conducted.

All Volume changes denoted in *blue font* will reset to black font upon a full revision of this Volume.

CHAPTER VERSION	PAGE PARAGRAPH	SUMMARY OF SUBSTANTIVE CHANGES	DATE OF CHANGE

CHAPTER 4

INTERNAL COMMUNICATION

0401 GENERAL

Internal communication refers to the commander's communication activities that serve to inform and communicate intent to a command's internal audience. It includes the CMC's communication to the USMC as a whole and each subordinate commander's communication to the members of his or her command, including immediate family members. Internal communication enables commanders to establish, maintain, and employ traditional two-way communication channels, both upward and downward, between leaders and command members. Internal communication flows horizontally within the command, as well. Internal communication also includes mission orders information that assists in communicating commander's intent.

0402 METHOD

Commanders must be deliberate about the ways in which they choose to communicate with internal audiences. A functioning internal communication program can directly impact mission accomplishment by enhancing personnel readiness, morale, and organizational knowledge among command members. COMMSTRAT Marines assist the commander in the execution of internal communication. While social media is a powerful communication tool, it does not replace conventional leadership and is discouraged as a channel for internal communication. Additionally, commanders, with or without assigned COMMSTRAT capability, are highly discouraged from using private or closed social media groups to disseminate command information or any information that can be misinterpreted as command information.

040201. Requirements. An internal communication program must:

- A. Be consistent with the USMC's values, ethics, and standards of behavior.
- B. Inform the internal audience with accurate, timely, truthful, and information that adheres to DoD, DON, and USMC policy regarding OPSEC and the protection and release of sensitive and classified information.
- C. Consider tactics and procedures to measure effects of communication efforts to determine whether command members are receiving and understanding internal communication.
- D. Coordinate internal communication activities with external engagement to ensure congruity between our obligation to communicate with the public and the information we provide to unit members and their families. For example, a media publication that provides more information about deployed forces than the commander has communicated to his or her own

command members can have detrimental effects to the morale of the command and its family members, subsequently decreasing unit cohesion.

0403 ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

040301 Director of Communication (DIRCOMM). Responsible for establishing the Marine Corps (Service) Communication Strategy and subsequent Communication Campaign Plans. DIRCOMM is responsible for disseminating USMC-specific information within the national media environment to commanders and staffs and supporting all CMC internal communication efforts to the force.

040302 Commanders. Commanders are responsible for keeping their internal audiences fully informed within the confines of security, accuracy, propriety, and policy. In carrying out this responsibility, commanders shall ensure an internal communication plan exists with specific, measurable communication objectives. They shall also assess internal communication effectiveness.

040303 Communication Strategy and Operation (COMMSTRAT) Officers. COMMSTRAT Marines assist the commander in the application of an internal communication program that uses research, planning, implementation, and evaluation to inform and advise communication activities.

040304 Defense Media Activity (DMA). DMA is the primary production and coordination center for DoD-centric news and information products, focusing on DoD-wide distribution via websites, print and visual news services, magazines and other products. DMA provides the information system which hosts all USMC public-facing enterprise websites, (i.e., marines.mil).

040305 Deployment Readiness Coordinator (DRC). The DRC and/or Uniformed Readiness Coordinator (URC) provides communication, deployment support, readiness and resource support, and volunteer management support to unit commanders, Marines, Sailors, and their families by communicating official and authorized communication with those authorized to receive command information, listed on the NAVMC Form 11654, "Unit Personal and Family Readiness Program Contact Authorization," or the Authorized Organizational Communication Tool (AOCT) through the Unite, Personal, and Family Readiness Program (UPFRP). DRCs/URCs will use the AOCT, email, newsletters or telephone as primary communication tools for their audience. DRCs/URCs will not disseminate unofficial information and will coordinate with the command release authority for dissemination of all official information.

<p>VOLUME 1: APPENDIX A</p> <p>“UNIT INFORMATION OFFICER (UIO) PROGRAM EXAMPLE”</p> <p>SUMMARY OF SUBSTANTIVE CHANGES</p> <p>Hyperlinks are denoted by <i><u>bold, italic, blue and underlined font.</u></i></p> <p>The original publication date of this Marine Corps Order (MCO) Volume (right header) will not change unless/until a full revision of the MCO has been conducted.</p> <p>All Volume changes denoted in blue font will reset to black font upon a full revision of this Volume.</p>			
CHAPTER VERSION	PAGE PARAGRAPH	SUMMARY OF SUBSTANTIVE CHANGES	DATE OF CHANGE

APPENDIX A

UNIT INFORMATION OFFICER (UIO) PROGRAM EXAMPLE

A template containing instructions on establishing a Unit Information Officer Program is available at: <https://www.marines.mil/Portals/1/Docs/CD/UIO-Program-Template.docx>

VOLUME 1: APPENDIX B

“DELEGATION OF RELEASE AUTHORITY LETTER”

SUMMARY OF SUBSTANTIVE CHANGES

Hyperlinks are denoted by ***bold, italic, blue and underlined font.***

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APPENDIX B

DELEGATION OF RELEASE AUTHORITY LETTER

A sample “Delegation of Release Authority Appointment Letter” is available at:
<https://www.marines.mil/Portals/1/Docs/CD/Sample-Appointment-Letter.docx>

<div>VOLUME 1: APPENDIX C</div> <div>“ACRONYMS”</div> <div>SUMMARY OF SUBSTANTIVE CHANGES</div> <div>Hyperlinks are denoted by <i><u>bold, italic, blue and underlined font</u></i>.</div> <div>The original publication date of this Marine Corps Order (MCO) Volume (right header) will not change unless/until a full revision of the MCO has been conducted.</div> <div>All Volume changes denoted in <i>blue font</i> will reset to black font upon a full revision of this Volume.</div>			
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APPENDIX D**ACRONYMS**

ACMC	Assistant Commandant of the Marine Corps
AFPIMS	American Forces Public Information Management System
AO	Area of Operations
AOCT	Authorized Organizational Communication Tool
AOR	Area of Responsibility
ATSD (PA)	Assistant to the Secretary of Defense, Public Affairs
CCIL	Commander's Critical Information List
CCMD	Combatant Command
CFC	Combined Federal Campaign
CHINFO	Chief of Information
CICA	Counterintelligence Coordinating Authority
CIIL	Critical Information and Indicators List
CL	Counsel for the Commandant
CMC	Commandant of the Marine Corps
CNO	Chief of Naval Operations
COMCOM	Combat Camera
COMMSTRAT	Communication Strategy and Operations
DIRCOMM	Director of Communication
DMA	Defense Media Activity
DoD	Department of Defense
DON	Department of the Navy
DRC	Deployment Readiness Coordinator
DVIDS	Defense Visual Information Distribution Service
EGA	Eagle, Globe, and Anchor
EOP	External Official Presences
FMF	Fleet Marine Forces
FOIA	Freedom of Information Act
GS	General Schedule
HHQ	Higher Headquarters
HIPAA	Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act
HQ	Headquarters
HQMC	Headquarters Marine Corps
HQMC (AR)	Administration and Resource Management Division
HQMC (CD)	Communication Directorate

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IE	Information Environment
IG	Inspector General
IGMC	Inspector General of the Marine Corps
IID	Information Intelligence Division
IO	Information Operations
IRC	Information Related Capabilities
M2X	Counterintelligence/Human Intelligence
MCCS	Marine Corps Community Services
MCRC	Marine Corps Recruiting Command
MIA	Missing in Action
MOS	Military Occupational Specialty
MWR	Morale, Welfare, and Recreation
NCIS	Naval Criminal Investigative Service
NMCRS	Navy-Marine Corps Relief Society
NOAA	National Oceanographic and Atmospheric Administration
NWS	National Weather Service
OAI	Operations, Activities, or Investments
OGC	Office of General Counsel
OLA	Office of Legislative Affairs
OPSEC	Operational Security
OSD	Office of the Secretary of Defense
PA	Public Affairs
PAG	Public Affairs Guidance
PNOK	Primary Next of Kin
POW	Prisoner of War
PPAG	Proposed Public Affairs Guidance
SE	Supporting Establishment
SECDEF	Secretary of Defense
SECNAV	Secretary of the Navy
SJA	Staff Judge Advocate
SME	Subject Matter Expert
SNCO	Staff Non-Commissioned Officers
T/O	Table of Organization
U.S.	United States
UIO	Unit Information Officer
UPFRP	Unit, Personal, and Family Readiness Program
URC	Uniformed Readiness Coordinator
USG	United States Government
USMC	United States Marine Corps

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VIEC	Visual Information & Excellence in Communication
VIRIN	Visual Information Record Identification Number