



UNITED STATES MARINE CORPS  
I MARINE EXPEDITIONARY FORCE  
U. S. MARINE CORPS FORCES, PACIFIC  
BOX 555300  
CAMP PENDLETON, CA 92055-5300

I MEFO 5700.1  
COMMSTRAT

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I MARINE EXPEDITIONARY FORCE ORDER 5700.1

From: Commanding General, I Marine Expeditionary Force  
To: Distribution List

Subj: I MARINE EXPEDITIONARY FORCE COMMUNICATION STRATEGY AND OPERATIONS

Ref: (a) SECNAVINST 5720.44C  
(b) SECNAVINST 5720.47B  
(c) MCO 5720.77  
(d) MCO 3104.1B  
(e) MCO 5600.31B  
(f) MCO 5750.1H  
(g) DOD INST 5400.13P  
(h) DOD INST 5405.03P  
(i) DOD DIR 5122.05  
(j) CJCSI 3205.01D  
(k) I MEF Order 1500.1C  
(l) I MEF Policy Letter 13-17  
(m) I MEF Policy Letter 5-18  
(n) Current Year I MEF Communication Strategy  
(o) MCIWEST-MCB CAMPENO 5000.2 W CH 1 BASE REGULATIONS  
(p) Combat Center Order 5728.2

Encl: (1) I MEF Communication Strategy and Operations (COMMSTRAT) Manual

1. Situation. This is a new Order and should be read in its entirety. It provides policy and guidance regarding the organization, roles, and responsibilities of I Marine Expeditionary Force (I MEF) Communication Strategy and Operations (COMMSTRAT) office.

2. Mission. I MEF COMMSTRAT develops and executes research-based communication strategies that advance the I MEF narrative, undermine adversary propaganda, and enhance Marine Air-Ground Task Force maneuver in the information environment while building credibility and trust with domestic and foreign stakeholders in order to support the commander's operational objectives and end states.

3. Execution

a. Commander's Intent and Concept of Operations

(1) Commander's Intent. I MEF's success and reputation as an operational fighting force is founded on solid planning, sound coordination, and teamwork at all levels of command. This order establishes policy and guidelines regarding the I MEF COMMSTRAT mission, organization, and functions. The objective is to ensure the efficient and effective application of COMMSTRAT resources to maximize the benefit for all organizations involved.

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(2) Concept of Operations

(a) All subordinate units shall use and comply with this order, references (a) through (p) and enclosure (1).

(b) Local standing operating procedures may be developed to augment the enclosure or to address evolving or specific requirements.

b. Subordinate Element Missions. Commanders will implement the contents of this order and augment the guidance with local directives, as required.

4. Administration. Recommendations concerning the contents of this order may be forwarded to the Assistant Chief of Staff (AC/S), COMMSTRAT, via the chain of command.

5. Logistics. Contact for AC/S, COMMSTRAT:

I MEF, P.O. Box 555019  
Camp Pendleton, CA 92055-5019  
DSN (312)361-7047/7004  
Commercial (760)763-7047/7004

6. Command and Signal

a. Command. This Order is applicable to all I MEF units.

b. Signal. This Order is effective the date signed.

  
J. L. OSTERMAN

DISTRIBUTION: I, II

## I MEF Communication Strategy and Operations (COMMSTRAT) Manual

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## Chapter 1

Fundamentals and Guiding Principles

1. Introduction. The intent of this manual is to outline the I Marine Expeditionary Force (I MEF) Communication Strategy and Operations (COMMSTRAT) capability, how it's organized and practiced, and how it is best resourced to effectively attain the commander's communication goals. It also serves as a baseline guide for all I MEF COMMSTRAT personnel in the performance of their duties, whether serving in a garrison or deployed environment. This manual is intended to serve as a framework for all I MEF COMMSTRAT personnel, as well as provide guidance on the appropriate use of COMMSTRAT resources for all I MEF personnel.

2. General. I MEF COMMSTRAT develops and implements research-based communication strategies in order to support the commander's operational objectives and end states. Proactive and research-based engagement is critical to sustaining public support for I MEF operational, Marine Corps institutional, and national strategic objectives in an increasingly complex Information Environment (IE). All I MEF COMMSTRAT activities are conducted in support of and in alignment with I MEF COMMSTRAT Communication Strategy and the I MEF Campaign Plan.

3. Mission. I MEF COMMSTRAT develops and implements research-based communication strategies that advance the I MEF narrative, diminish adversary propaganda effects, and enhance Marine Air-Ground Task Force (MAGTF) maneuver in the information environment while building credibility and trust with domestic and foreign stakeholders in order to support the commander's operational objectives and end states.

4. Themes and Messages. I MEF COMMSTRAT efforts will emphasize the I MEF themes prioritized by the command in the current I MEF Communication Strategy and I MEF Campaign Plan.

5. Core Competencies

a. Communication Counsel: COMMSTRAT will serve as trusted advisors to commanders, providing objective counsel regarding proposed courses of action and policy decisions and their impact on key publics.

b. Research: COMMSTRAT will employ quantitative and qualitative research to better understand problems and opportunities, the operating environment, internal and external publics, and cultural landscapes. These methods of formal research will inform the overall decision-making process, guide planning efforts, and improve the quality of COMMSTRAT counsel. COMMSTRAT is not an intelligence asset, but works in conjunction with other staff sections with similar capabilities.

c. Planning and integration: During operational planning, COMMSTRAT will use information gained through research to enhance the commander's understanding of the environment and the nature of the problem. This understanding will shape the commander's initial planning guidance and intent, which must include communication considerations. COMMSTRAT research will inform staff planning, to include: development of constraints and restraints; identification of potential intended and unintended consequences of planned actions within areas of operations,

interest and/or influence; and appreciation for the nature of information flow in varying cultural contexts.

d. Engagement: COMMSTRAT will proactively engage American and Foreign publics in both domestic and operational environments, approaching communication as a two-way social process of dialogue and interaction among people, as opposed to a technical process of one-way message delivery to a target audience.

e. Imagery acquisition and product creation and dissemination: Communication products will include written articles, photographs, video, widgets (e.g. smartphone applications), and multimedia productions optimized for intended audiences, distribution channels (particularly mobile), and ease of sharing among audiences. In the operating environment, COMMSTRAT Marines will attach to units at the lowest level, providing commanders with the ability to capture, document, and rapidly disseminate unit actions to preempt or counter adversary misinformation and disinformation.

f. Assessment: COMMSTRAT will incorporate assessments into all planning and execution steps, and feedback will be used to adapt and adjust actions accordingly. Preparation evaluation will assess the quality and adequacy of problem framing and strategic planning. Implementation evaluation (i.e. measures of performance) will assess COMMSTRAT efforts and outputs, such as the number of visitors to a website. Impact evaluation (i.e. measures of effectiveness) will assess the impact of the plan or action, such as the change in knowledge, attitude, or behavior of a specific population.

g. Issues management: COMMSTRAT will identify, mitigate and respond to potential or emerging issues in order to maintain credibility, get ahead of misinformation and disinformation, and further the I MEF narrative. Through continuous monitoring of the IE, COMMSTRAT seeks to forecast potential issues in order to shape perceptions and reactions.

h. Crisis communication: Proactive crisis communication enables the command to provide timely and truthful information while maintaining accuracy and minimizing the chance of misinterpretation of facts. Additionally, proactive crisis communication minimizes the potential of rumors and addresses the immediate concerns of families of service members in units who may have personal or professional links to the crisis.

#### 6. I MEF COMMSTRAT Organization

a. COMMSTRAT Plans and Operations section manages mission requirements and support to deploying MAGTF and task-force formations ahead of training and/or certification exercises and deployments to geographic combatant commands. Plans and Operations planners incorporate COMMSTRAT considerations into operational planning, to include strategic-level messaging in support of COCOM-directed initiatives. Plans and Operations efforts support service-directed and Global-Force-Management (GFM) requirements charged upon COMMSTRAT personnel throughout the MAGTF in order to leverage informational power and prepare ready COMMSTRAT forces to support the commander, subordinate commands and task forces, and adjacent and higher commands. Plans and Operations is responsible for synchronizing with the I MEF staff to ensure COMMSTRAT activities support the lines of operation identified in the I MEF Campaign Plan; final coordination must be conducted with the G-3 FECC

as the senior operations information environment (OIE) integrator for the Commanding General. Additionally, COMMSTRAT Plans and Operations is responsible for support to community events, COMMSTRAT equipment acquisition and management, and support to MAGTF pre-deployment certification exercises.

b. The COMMSTRAT Current Engagement section supervises the implementation of Engagement and production plans, and supports planning, execution and evaluation requirements occurring within 30 days of execution. Engagements tasks and responsibilities include media engagement, content creation, product dissemination, and management of digital-engagement platforms.

c. COMMSTRAT Research and Assessments (R&A) section provides a data collection and analysis capability to support I MEF COMMSTRAT communication planning and evaluation through real-time, data-driven analysis of the information environment.

## 7. Command Relationships

a. I MEF Information Group (I MIG) COMMSTRAT Company. The COMMSTRAT Company reports to the I MIG Commanding Officer (CO). Notifying the I MIG CO, I MEF COMMSTRAT Assistant Chief of Staff (AC/S) tasks the I MIG COMMSTRAT Company support to operational, exercise and/or training requirements to support OIE. The COMMSTRAT Company provides support to the I MIG subordinate units and the I MEF, I Marine Expeditionary Brigade (I MEB), and I Marine Expeditionary Units (MEU's) CE's; specifically it employs operational support teams for: product acquisition and creation; augmenting I MEBs and MEUs upon Change of Operational Control (CHOP); and other deployment requirements, such as MEU and SPMAGTF certifications and training prior to deployment.

b. 1st Marine Division. As an element of the MAGTF, the division maintains an organic COMMSTRAT capability. I MEF COMMSTRAT serves as a higher planning headquarters capable of research and assessments. Division COMMSTRAT will provide planning products to I MEF COMMSTRAT for review and approval to ensure communication plans and associated deliverables (e.g. communication plans, proposed public affairs guidance (PPAG), plans of action and milestones (POA&M), and so forth) to ensure unity of effort and a cohesive narrative throughout the MAGTF and the I MEF's higher and adjacent forces. This is subject to change based on specified Release Authority Matrices.

c. 3rd Marine Aircraft Wing. As an element of the MAGTF, the wing maintains an organic COMMSTRAT capability. I MEF COMMSTRAT serves as a higher planning headquarters capable of research and assessments. 3d MAF COMMSTRAT will provide planning products to I MEF COMMSTRAT for review and approval to ensure communication plans and associated deliverables (e.g. communication PPAG, POA&M, and so forth) to ensure unity of effort and a cohesive narrative throughout the MAGTF and I MEF's higher and adjacent forces. This is subject to change based on specified Release Authority Matrices.

d. 1st Marine Logistics Group. As an element of the MAGTF, the group maintains an organic COMMSTRAT capability. I MEF COMMSTRAT serves as a higher planning headquarters capable of research and assessments. Group COMMSTRAT will provide planning products to I MEF COMMSTRAT for review and approval to ensure communication plans and associated deliverables (e.g.

communication plans, PPAG, POA&M, and so forth) to ensure unity of effort and a cohesive narrative throughout the MAGTF and I MEF's higher and adjacent forces. This is subject to change based on specified Release Authority Matrices.

e. MAGTF Command Elements. I MEF COMMSTRAT (in concert with applicable COMMSTRAT force providers) augments MAGTF CEs as required. I MEF COMMSTRAT serves as a higher planning headquarters capable of research and assessments. The MAGTF CE COMMSTRAT will provide communication planning products and associated deliverables (e.g. communication plans, PPAG, POA&M, and so forth) to I MEF COMMSTRAT for review and approval to ensure unity of effort and a cohesive narrative throughout the MAGTF and I MEF's higher and adjacent forces. This is subject to change based on specified Release Authority Matrices and CHOP.

8. Ethical Considerations. I MEF COMMSTRAT resources are to be employed for "official purposes" only. Appropriated funds may not be used for social functions or personal gifts, unless there is specific statutory authority.

## Chapter 2

COMMSTRAT Operations

1. Introduction. I MEF COMMSTRAT has the capabilities to research, plan, implement, and evaluate communication activities in support of MAGTF training, operations, and community Engagements. This manual provides guidance to all I MEF personnel on the proper employment of these capabilities.

2. Plans and Operations. I MEF COMMSTRAT Plans and Operations forecasts upcoming Engagement opportunities and obligations and initiates preliminary, research-based communication planning efforts that support the commander's intent within the IE. This section executes Public Relations Strategic Planning Steps and the Marine Corps Planning Process to develop tailored communication strategies for scaled exercises and operations. Plans and Operations supports subordinate-unit COMMSTRAT offices to ensure the proper allocation of resources and personnel to support future activities, exercises and operations and reviews and validates subordinate communication plans.

a. Planning and Integration

(1) The Plans and Operations section reviews and selects from the I MEF Training and Exercise Employment Plan (TEEP) all upcoming events, exercises, operations and deployments that provide an opportunity to exercise I MEF COMMSTRAT lines of effort that support the I MEF Campaign Plan. Plans and Operations attends applicable boards, bureaus, centers, cells and working groups and represents the I MEF AC/S COMMSTRAT throughout the operational planning process beginning with the intelligence preparation of the operational environment and throughout all relevant planning conferences and events to ensure COMMSTRAT planners maintain comprehensive coordination and integration across the staff.

(2) The Plans and Operations section attends all regularly scheduled Operations and Intelligence briefings to ensure COMMSTRAT is kept abreast of activities within areas of responsibility where I MEF forces are assigned to ensure future plans remain in keeping with and complement the current operational picture.

(3) The Plans and Operations section attends scheduled Naval Integration Working Groups to remain up to date on all I MEF plans, activities and operations involving naval integration.

(4) The Plans and Operations section coordinates all COMMSTRAT plans with the G-3 FECC.

b. Concept Development. During the planning process, the Plans and Operations section examines the problems and opportunities within the information environment and develops a situation analysis that enables the drafting of documents that complement the commander's operational plan:

(1) Strength, Weakness, Opportunity, Threat analysis. This document identifies and seeks to take advantage of organizational strengths and opportunities while seeking to minimize any weaknesses or threats imposed by external factors that can negatively affect desired communication outcomes.



(2) Stakeholder Analysis. The stakeholder analysis aims to identify audiences and key publics involved or affected by I MEF actions or operations. Factors to consider involve a public's information use and whether they are passive or active toward an event or activity, and information that offers planners an opportunity to predict what information an audience may use to better inform themselves on I MEF activities.

(3) Annex F. The Plans and Operations section authors an Annex F to operation orders for all I MEB, I MEF Forward, and I MEF-level training exercises and operations. This document defines the public affairs plan that supports the I MEF operational plan. It follows the five-paragraph order format and details COMMSTRAT considerations within the context of the exercise/operation.

(4) Appendix 9/10, Annex C. The Plans and Operations section authors Appendix 9/10, Annex C to the operation order for all I MEB, I MEF Forward, and I MEF level training exercises and operations. This document defines the visual information plan that supports the I MEF operational plan. It follows the five-paragraph order format and details COMMSTRAT considerations within the context of the exercise/operation.

(5) POA&M. The Plans and Operations section initiates and maintains a COMMSTRAT POA&M for each I MEB/I MEF FWD/I MEF-level exercise and operation to ensure the COMMSTRAT activities and actions timeline aligns with and supports the I MEF operational battle rhythm.

(6) Public Affairs Guidance (PAG). The Plans and Operations section authors PAG for all I MEF exercises, operations, activities and contingencies that may garner public attention. PAG serves as an operational tool that guides commanders, staffs, and COMMSTRAT officers during a specific event, or for a specific topic.

c. Support to Community Events. Community events present vital opportunities to ensure the success and reputation of I MEF as an operational fighting force. Support for these events requires prior planning with sufficient and reasonable advanced notice to all participants. These requirements will mitigate any negative impact on unit training, maintenance cycles or leave periods, and facilitate well-planned and executed community outreach events. All requests for support to local or regional community events involving I MEF personnel, forces, equipment, or facilities shall be directed to the I MEF COMMSTRAT office, per reference (1). MSCs and other subordinate units shall not process or approve requests without first routing them to the I MEF COMMSTRAT office for proper coordination and approval.

d. Certification of Deploying COMMSTRAT Forces. The Plans and Operations section ensures the tasking of the I MIG COMMSTRAT company to support deploying COMMSTRAT forces during I MEF Expeditionary Operations Training Group pre-deployment training and certification exercises for MEUs, SPMAGTFs and Task Forces. The COMMSTRAT Company is responsible for scenario development, coaching and certification, and serves as the in-scenario higher headquarters throughout predeployment training exercises in accordance with reference (p).

e. Personnel and Information Management

(1) The Plans and Operations section maintains the I MEF COMMSTRAT Intelink site and tracks future planning activities, engagements, exercises, deployments, and messaging opportunities.

(2) The Plans and Operations section identifies capability development and Professional Military Education opportunities for CE, MSC and MSE COMMSTRAT Marines.

(3) The Plans and Operations section provides the CE and subordinate unit COMMSTRAT offices focused quarterly communication plans that nest with the I MEF Communication Strategy, Campaign Plan and TEEP.

f. Equipment Accountability and Supply Management

(1) The Plans and Operations section maintains overall cognizance for all I MEF COMMSTRAT program-of-record systems. This includes, but is not limited to: equipment fielding and redistribution, life-cycle maintenance, transfer, and disposition.

(2) In accordance with reference (e), all program-of-record table of equipment (T/E) items will be placed on a Global Combat Support System Marine Corps (GCSS-MC) account and tracked according to Marine Corps processes; all other accountable property will be tracked via local supply methods. A Responsible Officer (RO) will be assigned in writing by the I MEF Support Battalion Commanding Officer for all accountable property.

(3) The Visual Information Officer (VIO) will review all equipment procurement actions in order to ensure equipment is compatible with currently fielded T/E systems. Additionally, the VIO will review all maintenance contracts/service agreements in order to ensure proper life-cycle management of T/E systems.

(4) The Plans section manages the daily execution and reconciliation of the I MEF COMMSTRAT budget on behalf of the funds manager. All requests for consumable-level purchases, training and/or temporary additional duty travel must be coordinated through the Plans and Operations section for validation, status of available funding and first-level approval.

3. Engagement. The COMMSTRAT engagement section supports requirements within 30 days of execution. All engagement activities, to include third-party media, digital, and content development and distribution are the responsibility of this section.

a. Priorities of Support. I MEF COMMSTRAT will provide coverage of various events and official Marine Corps functions, provided they meet certain requirements or have requisite historical significance. In order to provide support to such events, requests and coordination must be conducted through the engagement section of the I MEF COMMSTRAT office. The types of events generally covered, along with priority of support and limiting instructions, are as follows:

(1) Operations. Deployed forces in support of GFM requirements, and operational and contingency plans have priority for support.

(2) Exercises

(a) I MEF, I MEF Forward, and I MEB-level events, as well as joint and multilateral exercises, have priority for support in this category.

(b) Secondary to the above, theater security cooperation events/exercises will be supported.

(3) External Agencies and Organizations. Joint Staff, Office of the Secretary of Defense, Headquarters Marine Corps (HQMC), Marine Corps Recruiting Command, etc., have priority for support in this category.

(4) Administrative/Historical Events. The following is a list of common events falling under this priority level; list is not all inclusive.

(a) Changes of Command and Relief and Appointments

1. I MEF COMMSTRAT generally provides documentation support for changes of command and relief and appointments at the O-6/E-9 level or higher.

2. I MEF COMMSTRAT coverage is generally limited to the following support: photography and video to document the ceremony, and graphic design support for ceremony programs. NOTE: I MEF COMMSTRAT cannot provide printing support.

(b) Official Marine Corps Birthday Ball Ceremonies

1. The Marine Corps Birthday Ball is a two-faceted event. One facet is the official ceremony and the other facet is the social event (e.g. dinner and dancing). I MEF COMMSTRAT generally provides coverage of the ceremony portion of the Marine Corps Birthday Ball.

2. COMMSTRAT sections are authorized to design and print programs for the official birthday ceremony; menus and invitations are also supportable. NOTE: Although authorized, I MEF COMMSTRAT does not have the capacity to provide printing support.

3. COMMSTRAT sections are not authorized to print products for the social portion of the ball (e.g. name cards, seating charts, and so forth).

(c) Retirements. I MEF COMMSTRAT generally provides coverage of the following retirements:

1. Retirements in conjunction with change of command or relief and appointment ceremonies.

2. Retirements of I MEF-level general officers or senior enlisted advisors such as the Sergeant Major and Command Master Chief.

3. Retirements with unique/historical significance (e.g. combat-wounded medical retirement, Medal of Honor recipient).

(d) Events Not Supported. I MEF COMMSTRAT generally does not provide coverage or support of the following types of events:

1. Routine award presentation ceremonies. Awards for heroic or valorous actions may be supported.

2. Mess nights, dining-ins, and other unit morale events.

3. Social or family events.

4. Retirements and official ceremonies not meeting the above criteria. If imagery is desired, I MEF COMMSTRAT offers a camera check-out capability for individuals to cover various events. For guidance on this capability, see section b.(5), below.

b. Printing and Production Support

(1) Printing

(a) I MEF COMMSTRAT printing support is limited to one standard multi-function device printer, similar to those common in most offices throughout the command. Printing capabilities are thus limited and on par with what other offices can accomplish independently.

(b) For more complex printing requirements such as books, brochures, booklets, covers, flyers, event posters, recruiting and retention poster design, designs for historical hallway displays, and event informational cards, customers should source these projects through Defense Logistics Agency Document Services (DLADS), subordinate-unit COMMSTRAT offices, or the Marine Corps Installations Command West (MCI-West) COMMSTRAT office.

1. Administrative printing requirements should be sourced through DLADS using unit funding.

2. Operational/tactical printing requirements should be sourced through MSC COMMSTRAT offices via I MEF COMMSTRAT.

(c) I MEF COMMSTRAT can provide guidance on the most appropriate printing source and will serve as initial liaison for any printing requirements sourced to MSC COMMSTRAT offices.

(2) Graphics Services. I MEF COMMSTRAT has capability to provide professionally prepared multi-media designs for publications, displays, signage, and limited illustrations. For printing of these designs, see section b.(1), above.

(3) Motion-Media Services. I MEF COMMSTRAT has capability to provide professionally prepared motion-media services, including targeted imagery acquisition, edited audio and video products, production document writing, media conversion and duplication, as well as video/audio coverage of official ceremonies and events.

(4) Unsupported Services. I MEF COMMSTRAT does not provide services or product creation for unofficial office/unit functions, such as gifts, mementos, dining-ins, mess nights, family events, and hails and farewells.

(5) Camera Check-Out Capability. Given I MEF COMMSTRAT's inability to support all requests for event coverage, a camera check-out capability is available as an alternative. I MEF COMMSTRAT has on hand a limited number of still imagery and video imagery camera systems available for check-out by members of I MEF. Completion of an equipment custody record card and a limit of 30-day duration will apply to all check-outs.

(6) Administrative Photography. I MEF COMMSTRAT does not support administrative photography requests. Administrative photographs, such as special program application photos, official passport photos required by orders, and promotion board photos are all conducted through MCI-West COMMSTRAT office.

c. Digital Engagement. I MEF's owned digital engagement platforms include Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, DVIDS, and Marines.mil. These platforms will be used to engage with I MEF audiences in order to support the I MEF COMMSTRAT.

(1) Types of Content. Generally, I MEF COMMSTRAT will post content supporting the I MEF themes from the current I MEF Communication Strategy in the following priority:

(a) Releasable information regarding I MEF Marines and Sailors engaged/supporting combat operations, theater-level operations, overseas deployments directly contributing to partner-nation relationship building and combatant commander/fleet commander narratives that I MEF Marines are supporting.

(b) Exercises and operations not falling under real-world operations, i.e. Fleet Week, Marine Week, pre-deployment training and so forth.

(c) Other content, i.e. safety messages, holiday messages, and so forth.

(d) I MEF COMMSTRAT will post and share content posted by HQMC, adjacent commands, and MSCs that is relevant, of high quality, and falls within one of the above categories.

(e) Personal social media usage by Marines, Sailors, civilians, and family members is permitted in accordance with reference (m).

(f) O-5 level commands and higher are authorized to have an external official presence in accordance with reference (n).

d. Media Engagement. I MEF COMMSTRAT seeks to build trust and relationships with external media, civic organizations, and key community leaders to better serve the public and to communicate I MEF's priorities and messages. Deliberately planned and well-researched media interaction advances the I MEF narrative and has the potential to undermine adversary propaganda and misinformation and disinformation efforts. The media officer coordinates, monitors and facilitates external media interaction with I MEF personnel and units in support of the I MEF COMMSTRAT.

(1) Information subsidies. The below traditional tools are used to engage external media.

(a) Media Advisory. Alerts or invites external media to an upcoming event.

(b) Press Release. Provides media with information to generate reporting about an event or issue.

(c) press Conference. Moderated opportunity to address media in-person and immediately receive and respond to questions.

(d) Response to Query. Any public queries pertaining to I MEF should be directed to the I MEF COMMSTRAT office. I MEF COMMSTRAT will make determinations on the release of information, in coordination with other staff sections as applicable, and respond to all queries.

(e) Media Escort. All media personnel must be accompanied by a COMMSTRAT escort while visiting I MEF personnel and resources aboard military installations.

## Chapter 3

Research and Assessment

1. Introduction. R&A section provides a data collection and analysis capability that produces valuable quantitative and qualitative information related to I MEF units to better understand the information environment in which they operate. R&A efforts enable communication planning based on real-time, data-driven goals and objectives and thorough evaluation of implemented COMMSTRAT nested within the I MEF Communication Strategy supporting the I MEF Campaign Plan. R&A evaluates both the impact and reach of originally created and distributed content as well as the general perception of I MEF by external publics and key stakeholders. Through forecasting of potential issues and crises or the expected reaction to a planned exercise or operation, I MEF COMMSTRAT can shape how information is perceived and understood by our audiences. R&A exists to evaluate the effectiveness of I MEF's COMMSTRAT efforts and determine how best to refine and improve these efforts in support of the commander's objectives.

2. Researcha. Quantitative Research

(1) I MEF COMMSTRAT employs media-monitoring and business-intelligence software to ensure relevant data is available to assess ongoing actions or planning efforts. Data-driven tools track all media mentions across broadcast, print/online and social media. Following this collection, all media-mention data is aggregated to provide quantitative information on the frequency of media reporting, audience reach, and the general posture of all mentions.

(2) I MEF CE COMMSTRAT maintains the business contracts for media monitoring platforms. As part of these contracts, a capability exists for I MEF CE and subordinate units to have individual user access with an associated dashboard, providing quantitative research specific to that unit. Access and coordination of these accounts is managed by the I MEF COMMSTRAT RA Section.

b. Qualitative Research

(1) R&A conducts qualitative research to gain a better understanding of information not acquired via quantitative methods to ensure goals and objectives in support of communication plans can be evaluated through multiple methods of research. This research focuses on obtaining a greater understanding of information needs and how they relate to the information environment in which I MEF units are operating. Research is based on observations to determine patterns, which ultimately create generalizations that can support future action.

(2) Methods employed by R&A to support qualitative research range in scope, internal or external to I MEF COMMSTRAT, working closely with other I MEF staff sections such as G-2. I MEF COMMSTRAT can conduct interviews, focus groups and surveys to gain insight and inform additional research.

(3) Further qualitative research is conducted with the intended end state of determining I MEF's presence in the information environment. External perceptions of I MEF can be largely shaped by the internal products released by the command. I MEF COMMSTRAT qualitative research adds the human element to understanding the impact of the internal products on the perceptions of the external community.

(4) Qualitative research is also used prior to and following the production and publication of organic COMMSTRAT messaging efforts. This research facilitates assessments of how opinions are being shaped by COMMSTRAT activities within the information environment.

### 3. Assessments

a. Quarterly Evaluations. R&A conducts quarterly evaluations measuring how well lines of effort detailed in the I MEF Communication Strategy are accomplished within the given time period. A total of four communication lines of effort support the five lines of operation defined in the I MEF Campaign Plan.

b. Commanding General's Monthly Report. R&A develops a report pertaining to a given date range, usually 30 days in duration, for presentation to key leadership. The report provides an overview of the information environment associated with I MEF units across assessable mediums. The report identifies key events or topics of interest and trends. Other points of evaluation pertain to I MEF's efforts in the battle for the narrative, sentiment of key publics, total reach, and distribution of content when comparing media and units. Assessment across all available media will be tied to key themes outlined in the I MEF Communication Strategy.

#### c. Information Environment Assessments

(a) R&A monitors the information environment daily. Key training, exercises, operations or noteworthy events are added to environmental scanning terms to ensure the most up-to-date, relevant news is being captured. Environmental scanning occurs consistently during normal operating hours and via mobile application.

(b) Information environment assessment also has value during a crisis. Proper research and assessment enables I MEF COMMSTRAT to gain a better understanding of current stakeholders involved and stakeholders' perceived organizational responsibility for the crisis. Also, monitoring of a crisis enables effects of communication efforts to be measured and if needed, adjusted accordingly. Information pertaining to a crisis is usually constructed via a one-slide assessment with reach of the crisis and evaluation of impact on the I MEF narrative, through varied mediums, with associated links providing examples of reporting.