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ALLIED COMMAND OPERATIONS (ACO) PUBLIC AFFAIRS

This directive is a rewrite of Allied Command Europe (ACE) Directive 95-1, "ACE Public Information", dated 03 June 2003.

- REFERENCES:
- A. MC 0457/1 NATO Military Policy on Public Affairs, dated 19 Sep 07.
 - B. MC 0458/1 NATO Education, Training, Exercise and Evaluation Policy, dated 27 Mar 06.
 - C. AD 95-2 ACO Strategic Communications, dated May 08.
 - D. Bi-SC Exercise Directive (ED) 75-3, dated 01 Aug 07.
 - E. ACO Public Affairs Handbook Version 2008.

1. **Applicability.** This directive is applicable to all ACO headquarters/units and forces under the operational command or control of ACO headquarters/units. This directive should be used as a guide for the preparation of local directives and policies. It should also be used as a basis for developing and fielding ACO, and national, Public Affairs (PA) support structure to meet Alliance PA support requirements in Peace, Tension, Crisis and Conflict.

2. **Supplementation.** Supplementation is authorised. ACO Chief Public Affairs Officer (CPAO) at Supreme Headquarters Allied Powers Europe (SHAPE) is to be provided with a copy of any such supplement.

3. **Interim Changes.** Interim changes are authorised when approved by the Director of Staff (DOS).

4. **Purpose.** This directive states policies, responsibilities, procedures, organisation, and concept of PA activities in ACO, including ACO PA support to Partnership for Peace (PfP) exercises.

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CHAPTER 1

PUBLIC AFFAIRS MISSION AND DOCTRINE

1-1. Introduction

a. The need to communicate effectively with a wide range of audiences is not just desirable, it is essential to gain understanding and support for NATO's operations. Public support for NATO's missions and tasks follows from public understanding of how the Alliance makes a difference to international peace and security. Public confidence, in turn, is enhanced by NATO's ability to achieve its mandate in a way that is open, transparent, and consistent with member nation values and expectations.

"The Parties to this Treaty reaffirm their faith in ... the Charter of the United Nations.... They are determined to safeguard the freedom, common heritage, and civilisation of their peoples, founded on the principles of democracy, individual liberty, and the rule of law."

- Washington Treaty, 1949

b. Military PA policy in NATO and the nations derives from the higher principles of democracy that includes freedom of expression and of the press. Commanders and Public Affairs Officers (PAOs) are in theory bound by NATO policies to inform the public **directly**, such as through the Internet or through the media, and by international law not to impede the media or freedom of expression.

c. NATO's adversaries use multiple tools at their disposal to inform and persuade the international community that they have the moral high ground and that NATO does not. They use technology and speed to their advantage, often disregarding truth in the process. This is the public environment in which NATO operational commanders must conduct their missions. In an effects-based approach to operations, enhancing support for the Alliance by maintaining credibility is **the effect** for the PA function.

1-2. **Mission.** The mission of ACO PA is to support Alliance aims and objectives through truthful, accurate and timely public release of information about the operations and activities of forces assigned to, or under operational command or control of the Supreme Allied Commander Europe (SACEUR) and ACO headquarters (HQ), consistent with NATO and national policies for operational security, and the privacy of forces and personnel involved.

1-3. **Functions.** The three basic functions of NATO military PA are:

a. **Media Relations** – activities designed to provide information through all mass communication means to NATO audiences. Commanders and staffs, through their PAOs, should be prepared to, for example: respond to media inquiries; issue statements; conduct briefings and interviews; arrange for access to permanent and operational units; and distribute information

including imagery, all as a means to develop relations with the purveyors of news.

b. **Internal Communications** – efforts to facilitate communication with and among NATO military personnel, civilians working for those organisations, and their families. Its purpose is to inform about the command or HQ, its people and its activities, and is distinct from administrative information or direction from the chain of command that is normally found in administrative or routine orders. Effective programs to keep internal audiences informed about significant developments that affect them and the work of their HQ creates an awareness of the organisation's goals and activities, increases work quality, and makes command personnel more effective representatives of the organisation. Those people in turn spread the message to their acquaintances, in effect becoming force multipliers.

c. **Community Relations** – programs usually associated with the interaction between NATO military installations in NATO member states and their surrounding or nearby civilian communities. These programs can take the form of addressing issues of interest to, and fostering relations with such audiences as the general public, business, academia, military-related associations, and other non-news media entities.

d. Reference E, ACO Public Affairs Handbook Version 2008, is a 'hands-on' manual for ACO PAOs on how to conduct these three basic public affairs functions. It expands on this ACO directive and is to be considered doctrinal in nature.

1-4. **Doctrine/Principles of Information.** ACO PA doctrine and principles apply across the spectrum from peace to conflict, and the principles of NATO military PA outlined in MC 0457/1 apply in ACO. PA is a command responsibility. The PA function at each level of command is directly responsible to the commander/command group. It may not be further delegated or subordinated to any other staff function below the command group. Commanders at all levels must ensure that PA planning parallels operational planning so that the following principles are achieved:

a. Truthful, accurate and timely release of information to the general public to inform them of NATO's operations, and facts and issues facing the Alliance.

b. PA activities in support of NATO operations respect the democratic principles of openness and transparency in the communication process. ACO PAOs shall never lie to or intentionally mislead the public.

c. Requests for information on topics within the purview of NATO and ACO will be answered in as timely a manner as possible, following these guidelines:

(1) ACO PAOs will limit their comments to information that is within their purview and headquarters responsibility. ACO PAOs are not a

source of national information. Requests for information that falls within the responsibility of the nations will be referred to the appropriate MOD information office.

(2) Requests for information with a political context will be referred, without comment, to the Press & Media Section of the NATO Public Diplomacy Division (PDD), if not previously co-ordinated and approved.

(3) Requests for information with significant legal content or implications (which are not always obvious) should be answered only after consultation with the appropriate legal office / advisor.

(4) Information should be provided unless its release is precluded by potential impact on ongoing operations, current security classification, policy, headquarters or national restrictions.

(5) Information should be provided without censorship and all bona fide media agencies will be provided equal access to information.

(6) Information should not be classified or otherwise withheld to protect ACO from criticism or embarrassment.

1-5. Policies for Release of Information

a. ACO PAOs must determine what information about the Alliance's operations is releasable. The principles of openness and transparency should be balanced against the principle of operational security for NATO operations. In respecting the principle of operational security, no PA activity should undermine:

- (1) the safety of personnel involved in a NATO operation; or
- (2) the likely success of a NATO operation or activity.

b. The principle of operational security may place limits on NATO's ability to live up to demands for complete openness; however, every effort should be made to be as open and transparent as possible within the law of war when informing the public about NATO's military operations.

c. Commanders must determine what information should be publicly released, and establish release priorities. Guided by its PA principles, NATO defines three military PA approaches:

- (1) **Very Active.** Significant and deliberate effort will be invested to promote awareness, visibility and to "push out" information. This approach is called for where real public interest is anticipated or desired and may be supported by a wide range of PA products and activities. Examples include NATO's engagement in Afghanistan, deployment of

the NATO Response Force (NRF), and major field exercises. 'Open House' type activities also fall into this category.

(2) **Active.** Routine effort will be invested to promote public awareness; the range and scope of information products or support activities are generally limited. This approach may be used when the activity is expected to have some audience interest, or where the public affairs return on investment given the time and resources expended is expected to be modest. Examples include minor field exercises.

(3) **Reactive.** Efforts are not made to promote wide awareness, but a PA plan and media lines may be developed in anticipation of media or public queries. As such, being reactive still means being responsive to queries: not answering the phone or saying "no comment" are not options. A reactive approach could be used when little to no public interest is anticipated; where operational security, policy, privacy, propriety, or higher guidance indicates that an active or proactive approach is not appropriate; or when full disclosure is not yet possible. It should be noted that a reactive PA approach can damage NATO's reputation if this approach is used when a "mistake" on the Alliance's part occurs.

1-6. Strategic Communications in NATO and ACO

- a. In concert with other political and military actions, Strategic Communications (StratCom) is used to advance NATO's aims and operations through the coordinated, appropriate use of Public Diplomacy, PA and Information Operations (Info Ops). This is done at NATO HQ level.
- b. Within ACO, StratCom takes in all components of the information campaign, but Public Diplomacy and political guidance are the responsibility of NATO HQ. Therefore, at the ACO level, StratCom will be conducted in concert with other military actions and **following** NATO political guidance, to advance ACO's aims and operations through the coordinated, appropriate use of PA and Info Ops, in cooperation with the Public Diplomacy Division. In essence, StratCom is the umbrella under which Info Ops and PA reside.
- c. Within ACO, StratCom will be conducted only at the SHAPE level and not by the subordinate operational commands.

1-7. Relationship to Information Operations

- a. As outlined in MC 0457/1, PA and Info Ops are separate, but related functions. They directly support military objectives, counter adversary disinformation and deter adversary actions. They both require planning, message development and media analysis, though efforts differ with respect to audience, scope and intent. All military information activities must be closely coordinated with PA in order to ensure consistency in the messages to external audiences and to promote overall effectiveness and credibility of the

campaign. Info Ops is a military function to provide advice and coordination of military information activities in order to create desired effects on the will, understanding and capability of adversaries, potential adversaries and other North Atlantic Council (NAC) approved parties in support of Alliance mission objectives. PA is not an Info Ops discipline. While coordination is essential, the lines of authority will remain separate, the PA reporting relationship being direct to the commander. This is to maintain credibility of PA and to avoid creating a media or public perception that PA activities are coordinated by, or are directed by Info Ops. Beyond coordination of efforts, messages, or being informed of these activities, PA will have no role in planning or executing Info Ops, Psy Ops, or deception operations.

b. PA is distinct from Info Ops in that:

- (1) PA transcends the theatre of operations - PA speaks to theatre, regional, international, and member-nation audiences.
- (2) PA is conducted continually through the war-peace continuum.
- (3) PA is targeted at both internal and external audiences.
- (4) PA is the only function that is mandated to communicate through the news media.
- (5) Info Ops and Psy Ops seek to influence decision makers or the behaviour of target audiences through careful study and targeting.
- (6) Using objective words and images, PA seeks to inform broad or target audiences and thus negate the influence of biased or erroneous information. PA may **not** use deception in its communication.
- (7) Info Ops and Psy Ops are often applied in a calculated fashion.
- (8) PA is routinely executed within minutes.

1-8. **Relationship to Nations.** There is a special relationship between nations assigning troops to ACO missions and to NATO's PA efforts. It is understood that nations have their individual national political and operational imperatives, but it is in everyone's interest that NATO and the nations say the same thing regarding missions, activities and incidents. As such, PAOs will coordinate with appropriate national military authorities to coordinate messaging as and when required. Liaison at the highest levels, such as with a nation's Ministry of Defence (MOD), should occur through NATO PDD at NATO HQ in Brussels. This can be arranged through ACO PAO at SHAPE. NATO PDD and SHAPE PAO provide all relevant information such as master narratives, media lines and imagery to nations on a regular basis. Nations should likewise provide their relevant documents to NATO and ACO for passage to subordinate formations.

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CHAPTER 2

PUBLIC AFFAIRS ORGANISATION AND RESPONSIBILITIES

2-1. General

- a. PA is a strategic military asset for commanders at all levels. Therefore, the PA structure in ACO should be robust enough to foresee events or issues of public impact, plan for efficient application of the Alliance PA principles, and to carry out media operations in support of the NATO's plans and operations.
- b. As stated in Chapter 1, within ACO's static locations and on deployed operations, the PA function at each level of command is directly responsible to the commander/command group. It may not be further delegated or subordinated to any other staff function below the command group.
- c. The Chief PAO at every level of command in ACO is **responsible** to the commander and **responsive** to the ACO PA chain, or technical network. This network (PA technet) is a non-official and non-restrictive communications network used by all PAOs to reach each other across NATO. It is also a strategic asset for PAOs and commanding officers.
- d. To respond effectively in a timely manner, while attempting to keep up with the very fast pace at which media are working on their own networks, it is of primary importance that PAOs maintain direct contacts with PAOs at all levels of authority to effect immediate information sharing and coordination.
- e. The PA technet is there to support commanding officers with their day-to-day operations, while respecting and not interfering with the existing chain of command. It provides assistance, advice, support, and effective co-ordination. While there is no direct chain of command in the PA technet, there are informal or responsive lines of communication from ACO PAO at SHAPE, through subordinate HQs to static and deployed ACO units under SACEUR's command.
- f. The execution of PA plans will, in many cases, require the deployment of PA personnel from various levels of the NATO Command Structure (NCS) in order to establish Media Information Centres (MICs), conduct PA activities on the ground or to augment PA staffs that are currently engaged. Every PA office within ACO must anticipate requirements and be prepared to support other NATO PA activities, both within and outside NATO's traditional area of responsibility (AOR).

2-2. Organisation

- a. ACO headquarters—SHAPE—and each ACO subordinate headquarters down to the Joint Force Command (JFC), Joint Command (JC), and

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Component Command (CC) level, and all ACO missions, must include in their organisational structure a PA office. That office must be manned and equipped to perform the tasks and responsibilities outlined in this directive.

b. The personnel manning of individual PA offices will vary according to each command's specific mission; however, each office must, at a minimum, be organised to conduct the following PA tasks: advice to the commander, PA planning, media relations, media analysis, imagery, internet, internal communications, and community relations. The office should be manned sufficiently to enable these functions to be continued during periods that require the deployment of PA personnel to support other ACO operations and during periods of prolonged PA activity, e.g. crises.

2-3. **Responsibilities.** Responsibilities for PA in ACO are as follows:

a. **General.** PA is a command responsibility. Commanders and staffs must communicate with the internal and external publics of NATO and non-NATO nations in order to gain understanding of the Alliance's objective and missions.

b. **ACO Chief Public Affairs Officer (CPAO) at SHAPE.** The ACO CPAO at SHAPE is SACEUR's principal PAO and **designated** spokesperson (SACEUR is the **principal** military spokesperson for NATO operations). The CPAO will assign his/her resources in order to conduct the following tasks:

- (1) Develop and promulgate to subordinate commands PA guidance, as well as PA plans, including objectives and policies in accordance with guidance received from NATO HQ and SACEUR.
- (2) Participate in the Operational Planning process and in all the Battle Rhythm meetings during crisis/operations.
- (3) Ensure that guidance and directions are included in the PA annexes of all SACEUR-originated OPLANs and Contingency OPLANs (COPs), and appropriate Support Plans (SUPPLANs).
- (4) Test these policies and procedures and train exercise players in ACO-wide and SHAPE command post exercises (CPX). (Note that essentially training is an ACT responsibility).
- (5) Plan and co-ordinate PA involvement in the deployment phase of ACO subordinate commands and Combined Joint Task Forces (CJTF) forces.
- (6) Inform and advise SACEUR, J(F)Cs/JCs/CCs, and the SHAPE Command Group (CG) on all aspects of PA activities and public/media opinion/trends.

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- (7) Prepare and co-ordinate the clearance and approval of PA products, including news releases about ACO operations and activities, release approved information to the public, and provide daily news summary and analysis.
- (8) Collect, review, summarise and analyse public / media opinion/ trends of news items/reports from periodicals and wire services on a 24-hour, 7-day basis. Monitor radio and television broadcasts.
- (9) Liaise with the Info Ops and Psy Ops functions under the auspices of the Chief StratCom to be aware of Info Ops campaigns, but have no role in planning or executing them.
- (10) Maintain liaison with PA staff at NATO HQ, SHAPE Chief Strategic Communications (CSC), J(F)Cs/JCs/CCs, ARRC, HQ NAEW and CFC, the Combined Joint Planning Staff (CJPS), the Partnership Co-ordination Cell (PCC), future CJTF/Deployable Joint Task Force (DJTF)/mission HQs, Crisis Response Operations (CRO) HQs and the MODs, United Nations (UN), European Union (EU), Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), EUROCORPS and any European force deploying under NATO Command.
- (11) Plan, co-ordinate and direct major cross-regional PA activities of ACO J(F)Cs/JCs/CCs.
- (12) In co-ordination with the Executive Assistant to COS for Cooperation (EACOS COOP) develop and promulgate policies and procedures for ACO PA activities in support of PfP exercises, and other cooperative issues including CRO.
- (13) Provide all possible assistance to news media representatives covering ACO issues and activities.
- (14) Conduct news briefings on PA issues and events of public interest as required.
- (15) In conjunction with SHAPE protocol and other appropriate SHAPE staff, organise and conduct unclassified briefings/discussions about ACO operations for visitors to SHAPE.
- (16) Organise a NATO Presentation Team to conduct NATO information briefings as required to NATO, PfP and NATO-candidate nations.
- (17) Serve as the proponent for standardisation of manning, equipping and training, throughout the ACO PA community for effective PA in peacetime, tension, crisis and conflict.
- (18) Advise and assist the PCC, as required, concerning media and

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PA/opinion issues.

(19) Provide media training to PA personnel, ACO commanders and subject-matter/technical experts in conjunction with ACT PA.

(20) In times of crisis, ACO CPAO at SHAPE will:

(a) Establish a PA presence with the SHAPE Strategic Direction Centre (SDC), in accordance with the Crisis Establishment of the SDC.

(b) Conduct media relations activities from the ACO headquarters (SHAPE) Media Information Centre.

(c) Provide two officers to the Media Operations Centre (MOC) at NATO HQ when activated.

(21) Develop policy and procedures for release of information to the public via the Internet.

(22) Promulgate the Annual ACO PA Plan.

(23) Maintain the NATO still imagery database.

(24) Ensure that proper information/document management archival practices are in place in accordance with applicable NATO directives.

c. SHAPE Deputy Chief of Staff Operations (DCOS OPS) and Deputy Chief of Staff Support (DCOS SPT) will:

(1) Support the accomplishment of ACO's PA mission and activities by assisting the PA staff in developing talking points/media response lines (MRLs), and by making 'subject matter experts' available for background sessions, briefings, panels, question and answer (Q&A) sessions, and other contacts with media representatives and public groups.

(2) Ensure that CPAO is integrated into the strategic planning process for ACO's mission and operations, and that information is made available to the ACO headquarters PA staff in a timely manner.

(3) Ensure adequate resources are assigned to the PA function to allow mission success.

d. J(F)Cs/JC/CC CPAOs. JFC/JC/CC CPAOs are their commanders' strategic and tactical PA advisors. They will:

(1) Comply with PA policies, guidance and procedures established by ACO CPAO at SHAPE.

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- (2) Develop and promulgate to subordinate commands PA policies, objectives, guidance and procedures, which supplement and reinforce those established by ACO CPAO at SHAPE.
- (3) Ensure that these policies, procedures, and requirements are reflected in detail in CC-originated OPLANs, COPs and SUPPLANs.
- (4) Inform and advise their commanders and staffs on all aspects of PA operations.
- (5) Participate in the command group planning process.
- (6) Gather and prepare information about ACO/JFC/JC/CC activities and release-approved information to the public in support of the commander's mission.
- (7) Maintain liaison with ACO headquarters (SHAPE) PA and subordinate PA organisations, plus national PA authorities within their region and with the EU, OSCE, UN and Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) as appropriate.
- (8) Inform their higher PA tech net organisation immediately when significant events occur.
- (9) Test their policies and procedures, as well as ensure training of appropriate exercise players in ACO-wide and JFC/JC/CC CPXs.
- (10) In co-ordination with ACO headquarters (SHAPE) PA staff, ensure that sufficient, qualified PA personnel and equipment are available at each level of command in the JFC/JC/CC to conduct effective and efficient PA activities on a continuous, sustained basis. Keep ACO CPAO at SHAPE informed of actions taken to obtain necessary PA personnel, equipment and funding
- (11) Organise and conduct unclassified briefings for public groups in order to contribute to the successful conduct of the commander's mission.
- (12) Provide all possible assistance to news media representatives covering JFC/JC/CC issues and activities.
- (13) Act as delegated spokesperson for their commanders.
- (14) Provide ACO PAO staff at SHAPE with daily summaries and analyses of significant regional news items on NATO/ACO issues and activities, and provide public/media opinion/trends as information becomes available.
- (15) Develop and co-ordinate PA activities, policies, Initial Exercise News Releases (IENRs) and PA operations in support of JFC/JC/CC-

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level exercises.

(16) Serve as the proponent for manning, equipping, training, and budgeting requirements and priorities throughout the respective JFC/JC/CC PA community. Ensure appropriate staffing, communications/word processing/audio-visual compatibility and redundancy, and budget allocation for effective PA in peacetime, crisis periods and conflict.

(17) In times of crisis, J(F)Cs/JCs/CCs will:

- (a) Establish a PA cell in their HQ crisis management office or similar organisation upon its activation.
- (b) Submit initial and follow on PA Situation Reports (SITREPs) to ACO CPAO at SHAPE.
- (c) Ensure that PA data is included in J(F)Cs/JCs/CCs ASSESSREPs when required.
- (d) Be prepared to assume PA responsibility for forces coming under JFC/JC/CC operational control.

(18) Develop and maintain a web presence in compliance with the ACO Internet policy. Supervise and co-ordinate regional release of information through the internet.

(19) Provide still and video imagery to the NATO imagery database on a continuous basis.

(20) Propose inputs to the ACO PA Plan.

e. **Operations.** A designated CPAO for an operation is the primary advisor to the commander for all the PA activities of the command. She/he controls and directs the activities of the MIC through the MIC director. She/he provides PA guidance to subordinate formation and unit PAOs upon TOA.

f. **National Authorities**

(1) Upon receipt of SACEUR's Request for Activation of national forces, nations should notify SACEUR and appropriate higher HQs in advance of release of any information regarding the activation, deployment or employment of those forces.

(2) Upon transfer of national forces (either in-place forces or external reinforcements) to SACEUR's operational command, national authorities should:

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- (a) Ensure that responsibility for PA activities relating to the operations of those forces is transferred to SACEUR simultaneously.
- (b) Coordinate with and support SACEUR's PA policies and activities when pursuing national PA activities related to those forces, including the use of NATO Standard Operating Procedures (SOP) as outlined in this document, in the ACO PA Handbook, and other guidance as promulgated specifically for missions.
- (c) Ensure the timely implementation of applicable plans to augment/support ACO PA organisations with personnel, facilities and equipment as specified in PA annexes of Contingency Operations Plans (Annex X).

g. Commanders of Forces under SACEUR's Operational Command will:

- (1) Comply with ACO PA policies, objectives, guidance and procedures.
- (2) Provide PA liaison personnel and other resources as specified in PA annexes of appropriate Operation Plans (Annex X).
- (3) Ensure that the organic PA assets of their forces are available to support ACO PA activities.

h. Individuals serving in ACO are required to contact, cooperate and co-ordinate with their NATO PA office before making any written or oral presentation to the media or general public on ACO/NATO topics. Such policies, whether set by a participating nation or a mission HQ, shall be as open and transparent as possible, the aim being to maximize the flow of information to the public.

2-4. Transfer of PA Responsibility for Forces Transferred to SACEUR's Authority

- a. Until nations transfer authority to SACEUR for their forces, the planning, co-ordination and conduct of PA actions relating to these forces will remain a national prerogative. ACO PAOs should never comment on specific contributions of/by any particular nation, unless specifically approved by the nation.
- b. When authority for these forces is transferred to SACEUR, SACEUR will simultaneously assume responsibility to plan and conduct PA actions that relate to the military operations of these forces. This will be done in co-ordination with the nations concerned. When TOA forces are assigned to


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NATO formations or HQs, those commanders will assume these responsibilities.

c. In order to effect the transfer of PA responsibility for forces coming under SACEUR's command at TOA, ACO and national PAOs should be familiar with the methods by which authority is transferred and with the timing of transfer.

d. For certain contingencies--particularly those involving SACEUR's Strategic Reserves (SR)--when operational command of forces is transferred to SACEUR prior to the arrival of forces in their employment areas (e.g. the forces initially stage in locations outside their eventual employment areas)--SACEUR will retain PA responsibility until such forces are committed or assigned to a NATO mission/HQ.

FOR THE SUPREME ALLIED COMMANDER, EUROPE:


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AMENDMENTS/COMMENTS

Users of this directive are invited to send comments, amendments and suggested improvements to the ACO Public Affairs Office at SHAPE (Attn: Chief Public Affairs Officer)