

# SOP 700

## PRESS & INFORMATION



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## SOP 700

### 701 **REFERENCE**

A/55/305 - S/2000/809 Report of the Panel on United Nations Peace Operations (Brahimi Report)

### 702 **GENERAL**

- a. A well-conceived and well-managed public information program is an essential element of any successful peacekeeping operation. The Report of the Panel on United Nations Peace Operations (reference A) stated that "effective public information and communications capacity in mission areas is an operational necessity for virtually all United Nations peace operations." They noted that this capacity "helps to dispel rumour, to counter disinformation, and to secure the cooperation of local populations." In addition, they added that this capacity could "provide leverage in dealing with leaders of rival groups, enhance security of United Nations personnel and serve as a force multiplier."
- b. The fact that SHIRBRIG is a multinational initiative designed to provide the UN with a rapid deployment capability ensures that any SHIRBRIG deployment will attract major international media interest, especially within SHIRBRIG troop contributing nations. The ability then to increase public knowledge and promote public understanding of the SHIRBRIG mission will not only contribute to mission success, it will also ensure continued support for the SHIRBRIG initiative.

### 703 **DEFINITIONS**

Public Information is defined as information, which is released or published for the purpose of keeping the public fully informed, thereby gaining their understanding and support.

### 704 **PUBLIC INFORMATION OBJECTIVES**

The objectives of the SHIRBRIG Public Information program are to:

- (1) Contribute to the overall success of SHIRBRIG by ensuring the most complete, accurate and timely availability of information about SHIRBRIG activities,
- (2) Position SHIRBRIG as a viable and valuable initiative for UN peacekeeping efforts,
- (3) Contribute to the ongoing global dialogue on UN peacekeeping concepts, and
- (4) Manage public expectations on SHIRBRIG capability.

705 **PUBLIC INFORMATION PRINCIPLES**

The public information principles for SHIRBRIG are as follows:

- (1) Public information is a command responsibility and its activities at all levels must support the overall intent of COM SHIRBRIG,
- (2) Public information needs and concerns must be taken into account during the development of operational plans at all levels within SHIRBRIG,
- (3) Timely and accurate information are to be made available so that the general public and news media may assess and understand the facts about SHIRBRIG and its mission,
- (4) Information which may cause criticism or embarrassment are not to be withheld,
- (5) Information should be withheld only when disclosure would adversely affect operational security, force protection, or individual privacy rights,
- (6) When speaking to the media, SHIRBRIG personnel must restrict their comments to their areas of expertise and refer those questions not related to their area of expertise to the SHIRBRIG public information office, and
- (7) SHIRBRIG personnel must not speculate or offer their opinions on matters that are not within their area of expertise.

706 **RELEASE OF INFORMATION**

Most information about SHIRBRIG is not normally of interest to the general public - particularly when SHIRBRIG is not deployed on a peacekeeping operation. Therefore, commanders should carefully determine what information should be publicly released, and establish priorities. In general information can be released as follows:

- (1) **Passive Release.** Encompasses most information in the day-to-day environment. Such information is not promoted as "news" but are made available when requested by legitimate media agencies.
- (2) **Semi-Active Release.** A semi-active release applies to information for which the media is likely to have a passing interest. Information released under this policy alerts interested media to an issue. Information can be released through news releases or media advisories. SHIRBRIG unit commanders

must be prepared to follow-up on media interest by responding to media queries and providing further information as necessary.

- (3) **Active Release.** An active release applies to issues or events anticipated to generate significant and broad media interest. For example, a SHIRBRIG unit "open houses" or "media days" prior to the deployment on a mission.

#### 707 **PUBLIC ANNOUNCEMENT GUIDELINES**

- a. When planning a public announcement, SHIRBRIG unit commanders, in advance and in a timely manner, are to:
  - (1) Consult with the SHIRBRIG public information office, and
  - (2) Obtain approval to proceed from COM SHIRBRIG.
- b. SHIRBRIG unit commanders must also take into account national dimensions of any public announcements. This would require commanders to ensure that they have the necessary clearance from their appropriate national authorities.

#### 708 **ORGANIZATION**

- a. Two Public Information Officers man the public information branch in SHIRBRIG HQ. Their responsibilities are as follows:
  - (1) Provide public information analysis and advice to COM SHIRBRIG,
  - (2) Provide public information guidance and plans in support of operational planning,
  - (3) Develop themes and key messages as required,
  - (4) Establish and maintain close working relationship with UN public information officers at UN HQ and when deployed on a mission,
  - (5) Provide public information advice and support to PIOs in SHIRBRIG units,
  - (6) Monitor international, national and local media agencies for information related to SHIRBRIG,
  - (7) Support and facilitate media visits to SHIRBRIG units,
  - (8) Respond to media queries and brief media representatives on SHIRBRIG as required,

- (9) Produce relevant and timely information products for release to media, and
  - (10) Produce relevant and timely documents for internal consumption.
- b. When deployed on a UN mission, the public information branch will be integrated into the public information office established by UN HQ.

709 **SECURITY**

Commanders are to ensure that information released through public information programs do not compromise operational security.

710 **ACCIDENTS AND SERIOUS INCIDENTS**

- a. Information on accidents and significant incidents involving personnel deployed with SHIRBRIG units are to be relayed via normal chain of command to the JOC as quickly as possible.
- b. Unit Commanders are to submit initial significant incident reports of an incident immediately following the event, even when all the details of the accident are not available. Information that was not originally available can be sent in follow up reports. It is important for unit commanders to note that a significant incident report must be submitted even if the unit commander feels that media is not likely to report on the incident.
- c. The SHIRBRIG public information office will coordinate the release of any information concerning accidents and significant incidents involving SHIRBRIG personnel.

711 **MEDIA ACCESS TO SHIRBRIG CASUALTIES**

There will be no media access to SHIRBRIG casualties without prior clearance by the SHIRBRIG public information office. Units are to contact the public information office whenever they receive a request by the media for access to SHIRBRIG casualties.