

DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY  
 HEADQUARTERS, U.S. ARMY FIELD ARTILLERY CENTER AND FORT SILL  
 FORT SILL, OKLAHOMA 73503

USAFACFS Memorandum  
 No. 25-50

12 March 2002

Information Management: Records Management  
**PREPARING AND PROCESSING CORRESPONDENCE**

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\*This memorandum supersedes USAFACFS Memorandum 25-50, 13 February 1998.

## CHAPTER 1

### PURPOSE, REFERENCES, AND DEFINITIONS

**1-1. PURPOSE.** This memorandum outlines staff procedures within HQ, USAFACFS, on preparing and assembling correspondence and staff actions and establishes procedures for scheduling conferences and briefings.

#### **1-2. REFERENCES.**

- a. AR 25-30, The Army Integrated Publishing and Printing Program.
- b. AR 25-50, Preparing and Managing Correspondence.
- c. AR 25-51, Official Mail and Distribution Management.
- d. AR 310-25, Dictionary of United States Army Terms.
- e. AR 310-50, Authorized Abbreviations, Brevity Codes, and Acronyms.
- f. USAFACFS Memo 25-52, Addressing of Distribution and Fort Sill Correspondence.
- g. USAFACFS Pam 25-51, Office Symbols.

#### **1-3. DEFINITIONS.**

a. **Command Correspondence.** Command correspondence is military correspondence between echelons of command and nonmilitary correspondence on matters affecting the responsibilities of the installation commander. Do not confuse command correspondence with command group correspondence which is formal correspondence prepared for signature of the command group: Commanding General (CG), Chief of Staff (CofS), or Garrison Commander (GC).

b. **Technical Correspondence.** Technical correspondence is routine information that deals with technical matters (i.e., reports, instructions, or requests) that do not involve command matters. Normally, this is the exchange of routine information between personnel of staff offices and their counterparts in higher, lateral, or lower headquarters. Technical correspondence expresses the personal viewpoint of the writer. Do not use this type of correspondence to commit resources or to reflect the view of the CG.

c. **Record Copy.** This is a copy of correspondence prepared IAW AR 25-50, paragraph 1-28b, and filed in the office of record IAW AR 25-400-2 as part of the official records of this headquarters.

**CHAPTER 2**  
**STAFF POLICY**

**2-1. GENERAL.**

- a. Use AR 25-50 as a guide in preparing correspondence.
- b. Prepare correspondence for Command Group signature in final form.
- c. The decision paper is the principal means of transmitting written or electronic communications to the Command Group for a decision.
- d. When possible, use electronic mail to transmit routine or recurring items of information to the CG and other members of the Command Group.

**2-2. RESPONSIBILITIES.**

- a. The Commanding General is responsible for policy, plans, decisions, orders, and instructions issued by this headquarters. Issue communications addressing these matters in command channels either by the Commanding General or "FOR THE COMMANDER:."
- b. The Directorate of Information Management (DOIM) will establish procedures for preparing, processing, and controlling correspondence.
- c. Directors of staff elements are responsible for the supervision and execution of correspondence to assure that it conforms to established procedures, that proper communication channels are followed, and that it is properly staffed and documented prior to release for signature and dispatch. The releasing officer will make sure that actions are complete and, if required, that proper routing for coordination is shown on the record copy. Record copies, copies furnished, envelopes, etc. will not accompany CG, CofS, or GC signature correspondence.

**2-3. AUTHORITY LINE.**

- a. Command correspondence (not being signed by the CG) containing suspense dates, taskings directed to subordinate commands, or addressed outside USAFACFS will bear "FOR THE COMMANDER" authority line.
- b. Correspondence signed by the CG will not bear "FOR THE COMMANDER:" authority line.

**2-4. COMPLIMENTARY CLOSE.** Complimentary closings on letters signed by the Command Group will read "Sincerely" when addressed to military and civilian

equivalents or subordinates. Use "Respectfully" when addressing the next higher grade and "Very Respectfully" for two grade levels higher **and above**.

**2-5. DELEGATION OF AUTHORITY.** Submit requests for signature authority in writing to Cdr, USAFACFS, ATTN: ATZR-CA (you may send request via e-mail to SGS). Include name, rank, organization, telephone number, and a brief outline as to the type of material for which signature authority is requested. Signature authority will be valid until the individual is reassigned, authority is revoked, or departure of the commanding general.

a. The Director of Information Management is delegated signature authority for the purpose of signing command correspondence except for those specific actions listed in paragraph 2-6c and may further delegate signature authority, by name, within DOIM for the same function.

b. The Installation Adjutant General (AG) is delegated signature authority for the purpose of transmitting normal personnel actions and may further delegate signature authority, by name, within the Military Personnel Division for the same function.

**2-6. SIGNATURES.**

a. Use signature blocks IAW AR 25-50, paragraph 7-4. Command Group and Installation Administrative Officer signature blocks are located on the following web site:

[http://sill-www.army.mil/doim/Correspondence/CORRESPONDENCE\\_ITEMS.htm](http://sill-www.army.mil/doim/Correspondence/CORRESPONDENCE_ITEMS.htm)

b. CG, CofS, GC, or person given specific signature authority under provisions of paragraph 2-5 will sign command correspondence. The Installation Administrative Officer will sign replies to command correspondence addressed to Cdr, USAFACFS, directorates, and special staff offices by title, unless signature of the CG, CofS, or GC is appropriate, or for those items that the CofS must approve.

c. Refer command correspondence to the SGS that includes but is not limited to--

(1) Matters affecting policy changes for Headquarters, USAFACFS, higher headquarters, and subordinate units.

(2) Correspondence addressed to major subordinate commanders such as IIIrd Corps Artillery, Training Command, or tenant activity commanders (i.e., DFAS, OTC, etc.).

(3) Correspondence that commits units or resources of this command.

(4) Disapproval of recommendations or requests signed personally by a major subordinate commander.

(5) Inquiries from general officers (active duty or retired).

(6) Matters in which the CG, CofS, or GC have expressed personal interest.

d. Send routine command correspondence (not to be signed by the CG, CofS, GC, or chiefs/deputies of general and special staff offices) to the Installation Administrative Officer for signature. [If issuing via paper, send to ATZR-UR. If issuing via electronic mail, send to the following e-mail account.](#)

DOIM Admin Office ([atzru@sill.army.mil](mailto:atzru@sill.army.mil))

e. The Installation FOIA/PA Official, Installation Administrative Officer, or Director of Information Management will sign correspondence relating to the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) [and Privacy Act. This includes taskings sent to Fort Sill organizational elements \(including tenants\).](#)

f. Directors, heads of staff offices, or authorized designated personnel may sign the following types of documents:

(1) Technical correspondence.

(2) THRU addressee correspondence when no comment is required.

(3) DA Form 200 (Transmittal Record).

(4) Forms with routing blocks showing "To" and "From" relating to technical or administrative matters when operating official's signature is required by regulation from higher headquarters.

(5) Correspondence actions between staff elements of this headquarters.

## **2-7. COMMAND ACTION TRACKING SYSTEM (CATS).**

a. Action Officer Designation. The SGS is designated the action officer for all official mail addressed to the Command Group. The SGS tasks items that require immediate attention, assigns staff actions, and maintains a transmittal record with the CATS.

b. Procedures.

(1) The SGS retains a suspense copy in the Command Group. When possible, advance notification is sent via e-mail.

(2) If you cannot meet a suspense, the staff office executive officer or equivalent must coordinate the change with the SGS. SGS may require interim responses.

(3) Notify SGS concerning time-sensitive actions requiring immediate attention within the Command Group.

(4) If it appears an organization may have assigned an action to the wrong office, the responsible office may informally contact another activity to determine proper pronency; however, do not transfer an action without concurrence of the SGS.

(5) Return the staff response with enclosures to the SGS.

## **2-8. CONFERENCES AND BRIEFINGS.**

a. The SGS is responsible for scheduling conferences and briefings held in the Command Conference Room (CCR), McNair Hall, and preparing the CCR for scheduled events.

b. Directorate of Plans, Training, and Mobilization is responsible for scheduling conferences and briefings in the Regimental Room, McNair Hall, and the Video Teleconferencing Center located in Training Service Center.

c. Special Actions Office, G3 Operations, Training Command, is responsible for scheduling conferences and briefings in [Reimer Conference Center](#), Snow Hall.

d. Chiefs of general and special staffs are responsible for scheduling conferences and briefings in their respective conference rooms.

## **2-9. SUSPENSES.**

a. Organizations will meet external and internal suspense dates. If you believe the suspense date is too soon, you can request an extension from originator. If an extension is not possible, you will meet the initial suspense date. Do not use "suspense is dictated by date of event."

(1) Answer all taskers/notes from the CG within 48 hours or as directed. If you cannot provide a final answer within this time limit, furnish an interim response within 48 hours.

(2) Answer all taskers/notes from the CofS within 10 working days or as directed. If you cannot provide a final answer within this time limit, furnish an interim response within 5 working days.

(3) Answer all taskers/notes from the Installation Records Manager (IRM) concerning Freedom of Information Act/Privacy Act requests and records searches within the suspense date indicated. If you cannot provide a final answer within the time limit set, furnish an interim response prior to the suspense date.

(4) For other correspondence, if the suspense is too soon, the activity will request an extension from the originating Fort Sill agency. If an extension is not possible, you will meet the initial date. Waiting until just before the suspense to notify the originator of a problem is poor staff work. Avoid efforts to push actions through the command group at the last minute. This is an indication of poor staff work. In instances where short suspenses are unavoidable, notify the SGS or CofS in advance. Generally, the action officer should accompany the action on a walk-through basis to the Command Group.

b. Promptly answer routine communications. Directorates and special staffs will adhere to the following schedules for replying to noncontrolled correspondence.

(1) Communications from off-post commands, activities, and individuals: 5 working days after receipt.

(2) Communications from separate headquarters and activities on-post: 7 working days after receipt.

(3) Communications from elements of this headquarters: 10 working days after receipt.

(4) Time stamping mail is authorized only for documents that require a record of time receipt or is of legal or monetary significance (e.g., bids, invoices, contracts, and claims).

## **2-10. COORDINATION.**

a. Staff coordination should start early in the process among action officers; sharing pencil drafts for comments is recommended for complex issues. Make every effort to include the "concerns" and "fixes" of interested staff agencies and commands. [Organizations will reply to staffing actions. Organizations will not include "We will consider no reply as a concurrence" in their staffing actions.](#)

b. Statement "Concur with Comment" - This is really a "nonaction." It places no obligation on the originating agency or decision maker to consider the comment.

c. Coordinate any action that establishes or changes policy with those who will execute policy. Generally, 10 working days are sufficient. For complex issues, more time may be appropriate, especially in the case of III Corps Artillery and Training Command, which may need comments from internal brigades and battalions.

d. Nonconcurrences signify a major disagreement in policy, procedures, or philosophy and are not taken lightly. Therefore, action officers, directors, and subordinate commanders must make every effort to resolve differences prior to submission to the decision maker.

e. When resolution is not possible, nonconcurring officials will prepare a statement of nonconurrence (informal memorandum) and attach as last tab. Address nonconurrence to the originating staff office. Only a commander or director may sign a nonconurrence. Enter the tab letter in concur/nonconcur blank.

f. When nonconcurrences are not resolved, the originating action office will prepare a consideration of nonconurrence using a Memorandum for Record (MFR) with a copy furnished to the nonconcurring office. In such cases, the last paragraph of the memorandum will be as follows: "COL Doe and I have personally discussed this matter and are unable to resolve our differences. We both adhere to our initial positions." Include MFR as part of the last tab of package.

g. Include the rank (i.e., LTC, Mr., Ms.) and name of the individual concurring or nonconcurring on the decision paper along with the date.

h. Record staff coordination on actions that do not require a decision paper on the record copy.

i. The final approved product of staff actions that establishes a change in policy, or otherwise requires action, must be in the hands of the organizations responsible for implementing the new policy 42 calendar days prior to the effective date. A draft copy of actions requiring coordination will be out 90 days in advance of the event.

**2-11. DISTRIBUTION.** Use the distribution formula shown in USAFACFS Memo 25-52 when preparing correspondence. List addressees who are required to take action under "DISTRIBUTION." List other units/activities having interest in the subject matter, but no action is required, under "COPIES FURNISHED." If necessary, you may add units to the end of the format. Addresses under "DISTRIBUTION:" may be all capital letters as shown in examples located in USAFACFS Memo 25-52 or may be upper and lower case.

## CHAPTER 3

### FORMATS

**3-1. GENERAL.** Formats for memorandums, informal memorandums, and letters will be IAW AR 25-50. *When creating official correspondence, use type fonts that make the correspondence easy to read and understand (i.e., Arial, Times New Roman, etc). Limit font size to 10 or 12, with 12 being the standard. Do not use unusual type styles, such as script, to create official correspondence. Use Times New Roman (font size 12) for correspondence being signed by the Commanding General.* Signature blocks for USAFACFS Command Group personnel and the Installation Administrative Officer are located on the following web site:

[http://sill-www.army.mil/doim/Correspondence/CORRESPONDENCE\\_ITEMS.htm](http://sill-www.army.mil/doim/Correspondence/CORRESPONDENCE_ITEMS.htm)

**3-2. STAR NOTE.**

- a. Submit star notes in final form. No drafts.
- b. Submit the star note with a decision paper detailing its purpose and enclose it in a manila folder to protect the note.
- c. Ensure the body of the note is centered between the date and the bottom of the page.

**3-3. DECISION PAPER.**

a. Use a decision paper to forward outgoing correspondence to the Command Group for signature or to request approval of a given subject. Prepare a decision paper as an informal memorandum. Decision papers should normally not exceed two pages in length (excluding supporting documents). Summarize issues so that when read, the decision paper represents the complete situation without referring readers to tabs. Reserve tabs for a detailed analysis or explanation of the summary presented in the decision paper. Properly identify the tabs in the decision paper. **Do not use decision papers to conduct staffing actions prior to sending to decision maker. Use informal memorandums.**

- b. An example of a decision paper is shown at figure 1.

**3-4. FACT SHEET AND INFORMATION PAPER.**

a. Use a fact sheet to transmit factual information to the reader quickly. **Use it on-post only.** Keep the fact sheet to one page.

- b. An example of a fact sheet is at figure 2.

**3.5. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY.**

a. Use the executive summary when providing the reader (General Officer) a brief, general overview of the document you wish him/her to read.

- b. An example of executive summary is at figure 3.

**3-6. ISSUE PAPER.**

- a. Use the issue paper to answer/reply to Command Group's taskers or questions.
- b. An example of an issue paper is at figure 4.

**3-7. READ-AHEADS.** Read-aheads are special type of staff actions that prepare the action officer (CG, CofS, etc.) for trips, visits of civilian or military dignitaries, or

briefings. As such, the completeness of a read-ahead is critical to the success of a trip, visit, or briefing it covers.

a. Procedures. Trips, visits, and briefings are normally identified on the Command Group personnel's calendar 2 weeks prior to the event. The SGS tasks appropriate staff elements to prepare read-aheads with a suspense date. The SGS will review read-aheads for completeness and accuracy. Staff proponents should ensure they submit a polished, complete read-ahead.

b. Format. There is no specific format for read-aheads. Recommend using the fact sheet format, enclosing supporting documents to complete the read-ahead.

c. Assembly. Read-aheads are assembled similar to other staff actions, with the following differences.

(1) Place in 1/2 inch white, three ring binder.

(2) Place a table of contents at the front of the packet.

(3) Use numbered or alphabetic dividers to separate each read-ahead in the packet.

## CHAPTER 4

### PROCESSING CORRESPONDENCE

**4-1. ASSEMBLING A STAFF ACTION.** Assemble staff actions except read-aheads as indicated below:

a. All paperwork requiring CG, CofS, or GC action must have a decision paper as a cover sheet. Pay particular attention to coordination and actions required. Be specific and clear on what you want signed, initialed, etc.

b. Use binder clips, clam clamps, or staples if appropriate. Do not use paper clips and do not staple documents containing memorandums, letters, certificates, or 2-star notes for signature. Ensure all paper is aligned.

c. Use manila folders only when needed to protect contents from damage (i.e., awards, certificates, etc.).

d. Prepared tabs A, B, etc., are attached if referred to in the correspondence. Printed tabs are available through DOIM Publications Supply as FORSCOM Form 257 A-R, 257 B-R, etc. When using tabs that are attached to paper, attach them to a blank sheet of paper.

e. Use only orange, green, and red signature tabs. Orange for the GC; green for the CofS; red for the CG. Do not use other colors.

f. Name the original paper requiring signature (or approval) Tab A.

g. Name the action origination (tasking), if applicable, Tab B.

h. Attach detailed background material that expands items discussed in the body of the decision paper as Tab C. Use succeeding tabs in the order mentioned. Use pertinent extracts of lengthy publications and referenced documents including messages.

**4-2. LOGGING STAFF ACTIONS.** The SGS will log each action into the CATS. The SGS will route action to appropriate member of the Command Group. The SGS will send replies to appropriate e-mail address. Turnaround time for documents sent to the Command Group is 2 to 3 days depending on CG availability.

ATZR-URA (25-30ff)

8 January 2002

MEMORANDUM FOR CHIEF OF STAFF

SUBJECT: Publication of USAFACFS Memo 25-50 – DECISION PAPER

1. This is a decision paper. There is no suspense.
2. Purpose. To update procedures for preparing headquarters correspondence by installation personnel and support elements.
3. Recommendation. That you approve the proposed USAFACFS Memorandum 25-50, Preparing and Processing Correspondence (TAB A).
4. Reasons.
  - a. The existing memorandum is out-of-date. The last publication of USAFACFS Memo 25-50 was 12 Aug 94 (TAB B).
  - b. Reflect new procedures required by Command Group.
5. Coordination. We have staffed this proposed memorandum through the appropriate offices at Fort Sill. It meets with everyone's approval.
6. POC is Mr. Smith, 2-5555.

2 Encls  
as

NICHOLAS L. BONACCI  
Director of Information  
Management

COORDINATION:

ATZR-A	Concur	Mr. Long	21 Dec 01
ATZR-F	Concur	LTC Pirtle	21 Dec 01
ATZR-R	Concur	Mr. Hanson	21 Dec 01
ATZR-U	Concur	Mr. Disco	21 Dec 01

APPROVED \_\_\_\_\_  
DISAPPROVED \_\_\_\_\_  
SEE ME \_\_\_\_\_

Figure 1. Decision Paper

Procedures for preparing decision papers.

a. Margins are 1 inch top, bottom, left, and right.

b. Address the decision paper as follows. Routing within the Command Group is routinely accomplished by the SGS. Correspondence from Training Command and III Corps Artillery is addressed to Commanding General; no thru addresses are required.

(1) Commanding General's approval/signature--

MEMORANDUM THRU

GARRISON COMMANDER (when appropriate)  
CHIEF OF STAFF

FOR COMMANDING GENERAL

(2) Chief of Staff's approval/signature--

MEMORANDUM FOR CHIEF OF STAFF

(3) Garrison Commander's approval/signature--

MEMORANDUM FOR GARRISON COMMANDER

c. In paragraph 1 you can also use one of the following.

(1) Internal suspense is --.

(2) Suspense to TRADOC is --.

d. Reasons should include -- What happened? What action did you do? What items are enclosed? Show different items as TAB A, TAB B, etc.

e. List each office with which coordination was made. If no coordination was made, omit the coordination line. If someone nonconcur and no compromise was reached, indicate so after the word COORDINATION or on the next line below last line of the coordination list. Place the appropriate documents at the last tab. (See paragraph 2-10f.)

Figure 1. Decision Paper (CONT)

## FACT SHEET

(MARKS NUMBER)  
OFFICE SYMBOL  
ACTION OFFICER/PHONE  
DATE

SUBJECT: Preparing a Fact Sheet

PURPOSE: To set a standard format for Fact Sheets at Fort Sill.

### FACTS:

1. General. This sample prescribes the format for Fact Sheets at Fort Sill since AR 25-50 does not discuss Fact Sheets.
2. Uses. Use the Fact Sheet to transmit factual information to the reader for quick access. **Use it on-post only.**
3. Guidelines.
  - a. Type single space on plain bond paper.
  - b. Center the term FACT SHEET (INFORMATION PAPER, BACKGROUND PAPER, DISCUSSION PAPER, or TALKING PAPER) eight lines (or 1 inch) from the top of the page. Make left, right, and bottom margins at least 1 inch.
  - c. Add a heading that lists the appropriate MARKS number, the name of the preparing agency, its office symbol, name of action officer, phone number, and date.
  - d. Keep the Fact Sheet to one page.
4. Enclosures. Limit enclosures to tabular data or illustrations. Indicate enclosures per AR 25-50 and as shown below.

Encl

(NOTE - Fact Sheets may be embedded in e-mail notes; format remains the same.)

Figure 2. Fact Sheet

**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY  
(EXSUM)**

(MARKS NUMBER)  
OFFICE SYMBOL  
ACTION OFFICER/PHONE  
DATE

SUBJECT: (Same as the document attached.)

SNYOPSIS:

1. Provide a brief, general overview of the attached document.
2. Keep the Executive Summary to a single page.
3. Use bond paper and make margins 1 inch (left, right, top, bottom). Center "Executive Summary" at the top of the page. For Executive Summaries for the CG, use Times New Roman, font size 12.

Figure 3. Executive Summary

**ISSUE PAPER**

OFFICE SYMBOL (MARKS #) DATE

**ISSUE:** (Restate Command Group's Question/Tasker Word for Word)

**REFERENCE:** (Memo, office symbol, subject, date)

(Include blank lines to divide subject matter but you can adjust space as needed).

**RESPONSE:** (Be brief and concise; try to keep complete action on one page.)

**ACTION OFFICER:** (name, office, phone number, e-mail address)

**DIRECTOR'S/COMMAND GROUP COMMENTS:** (As required but must be at least initialed and dated.)

**GENERAL OFFICER COMMENT:** (FAS/III CA)

**CHIEF OF STAFF COMMENT:**

**COMMANDING GENERAL COMMENT:**

Figure 4. Issue Paper

(ATZR-URA)

FOR THE COMMANDER:



ROBERT A. CLINE  
COL, FA  
Chief of Staff

NICHOLAS L. BONACCI  
Director of Information  
Management

DISTRIBUTION:  
Fort Sill Internet