



**NAVAL
POSTGRADUATE
SCHOOL**

MONTEREY, CALIFORNIA

THESIS

**RETHINKING PSYOP: HOW DOD COULD
RESTRUCTURE TO COMPETE IN THE INFORMATION
ENVIRONMENT**

by

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December 2016

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REPORT DOCUMENTATION PAGE			Form Approved OMB No. 0704-0188	
Public reporting burden for this collection of information is estimated to average 1 hour per response, including the time for reviewing instruction, searching existing data sources, gathering and maintaining the data needed, and completing and reviewing the collection of information. Send comments regarding this burden estimate or any other aspect of this collection of information, including suggestions for reducing this burden, to Washington headquarters Services, Directorate for Information Operations and Reports, 1215 Jefferson Davis Highway, Suite 1204, Arlington, VA 22202-4302, and to the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reduction Project (0704-0188) Washington DC 20503.				
1. AGENCY USE ONLY (Leave blank)	2. REPORT DATE December 2016	3. REPORT TYPE AND DATES COVERED Master's thesis		
4. TITLE AND SUBTITLE RETHINKING PSYOP: HOW DOD COULD RESTRUCTURE TO COMPETE IN THE INFORMATION ENVIRONMENT			5. FUNDING NUMBERS	
6. AUTHOR(S) David B. Quayle, Justin J. Schiltz, Shawn A. Stangle				
7. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES) Naval Postgraduate School Monterey, CA 93943-5000			8. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION REPORT NUMBER	
9. SPONSORING /MONITORING AGENCY NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES) N/A			10. SPONSORING / MONITORING AGENCY REPORT NUMBER	
11. SUPPLEMENTARY NOTES The views expressed in this thesis are those of the author and do not reflect the official policy or position of the Department of Defense or the U.S. Government. IRB number ___N/A___.				
12a. DISTRIBUTION / AVAILABILITY STATEMENT Approved for public release. Distribution is unlimited.			12b. DISTRIBUTION CODE A	
13. ABSTRACT (maximum 200 words) This thesis focuses on the strategic usefulness and proper employment of Psychological Operations (PSYOP). Numerous political and military leaders speak about the importance of competing in the information environment in the struggle against violent extremism, as well as against the United States' near-peer rivals. A capability gap exists between what U.S. Army PSYOP could do and how it is currently employed. This gap reflects the lack of consistent attention and resources provided for the conduct of influence operations when U.S. forces are deployed. The authors make the case for how the relevance of Army PSYOP could and should be enhanced.				
14. SUBJECT TERMS psychological warfare, information warfare, psychological operations, psyop, military information support operations, miso, influence operations, public diplomacy, strategic communications, information environment			15. NUMBER OF PAGES 85	
			16. PRICE CODE	
17. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF REPORT Unclassified	18. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF THIS PAGE Unclassified	19. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF ABSTRACT Unclassified	20. LIMITATION OF ABSTRACT UU	

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**MASTER OF SCIENCE IN INFORMATION STRATEGY AND
POLITICAL WARFARE**

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ABSTRACT

This thesis focuses on the strategic usefulness and proper employment of Psychological Operations (PSYOP). Numerous political and military leaders speak about the importance of competing in the information environment in the struggle against violent extremism, as well as against the United States' near-peer rivals. A capability gap exists between what U.S. Army PSYOP could do and how it is currently employed. This gap reflects the lack of consistent attention and resources provided for the conduct of influence operations when U.S. forces are deployed. The authors make the case for how the relevance of Army PSYOP could and should be enhanced.

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LIST OF ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

1st SFC (A)	1st Special Forces Command (Airborne)
AFHQ	Allied Force Headquarters
ARSOF	Army Special Operations Forces
ASD	Assistant Secretary of Defense
BBG	Broadcasting Board of Governors
CA	U.S. Army Civil Affairs
CF	conventional forces
CG	Command General
CIA	Central Intelligence Agency
COI	Coordinator of Information
COL	Colonel
COLA	Cost of Living Allowance
CPI	Community on Public Information
CRS	Congressional Research Service
CSCC	Center for Strategic Counterterrorism Communications
DIA	Defense Intelligence Agency
DIME-FIL	diplomatic, information, military, economic, financial, intelligence and law
DOD	Department of Defense
DOS	Department of State
DOTMLPF	doctrine, organization, training, material, leadership and education, personnel, facilities
FAO	Foreign Area Officer
FIS	Foreign Information Service
FSN	Foreign Service National

FSO	Foreign Service Officer
G-2	intelligence section
G-2-D	Psychologic Subsection of the Military Intelligence Branch
GCC	Geographic Combatant Command
GEC	Global Engagement Center
HASC	House Armed Services Committee
HR	House Resolution
IE	information environment
INC	Information and Censorship Section
ISIS	Islamic State of Iraq and Syria
JUSPAO	Joint United States Public Affairs Office
KD	key developmental
MIS	Military Intelligence Service
MISOC	Military Information Support Operations Command
MISO	Military Information Support Operations
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
NCO	noncommissioned officer
NPS	Naval Postgraduate School
OE	operational environment
OGA	other government agency
OSS	Office of Strategic Services
OWI	Office of War Information

PCS	permanent change of station
PRC	People's Republic of China
PSYOP	U.S. Army Psychological Operations
PWD/SHAEF	Psychological Warfare Division of the Supreme Headquarters, Allied Expeditionary Force
RVN	Republic of Vietnam
SF	U.S. Army Special Forces
SMU	Special Mission Unit
SOF	Special Operations Forces
TDY	Temporary Duty
TSOC	Theater Special Operations Command
USACAPOC	United States Army Civil Affairs and Psychological Operations Command
USASOC	United States Army Special Operations Command
USIA	United States Information Agency
USIS	United States Information Service
USSOCOM	United States Special Operations Command
VOA	Voice of America

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The authors would like to thank the following individuals for their support, input, and mentorship: Dr. Robert Kodosky, COL T. Bruce Sweeney, members of the NPS PSYOP directed study, and numerous members of the PSYOP Regiment, past and present. A special thanks to Professor Anna Simons for her patience and guidance throughout this process. Our greatest thanks go to our spouses, whose support and patience made this project possible.

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I. INTRODUCTION

This thesis grew out of a directed study held at the Naval Postgraduate School in the spring of 2016 that examined the current state of U.S. Army Psychological Operations (PSYOP). A group of PSYOP officers drew from their experiences, which included tactical deployments to Iraq and Afghanistan, regional rotations in three separate Geographic Combatant Commands (GCC), and other positions, to identify best practices and common challenges found in the PSYOP branch. In addition to making use of these insights the authors reviewed the past century of American influence operations. We looked at government documents as well as histories, some of which were written by those who participated in the action, some by more detached observers. We also took into account the testimony and statements made by contemporary officials and scholars.

Our research findings confirmed observations made by serving PSYOP officers: there are several ways in which the U.S. government and the Department of Defense are failing to coordinate the conduct of influence operations. The government currently has no single organization leading the fight in the influence realm, and the U.S. Army's Psychological Operations branch is not being used to its full potential. A look at recent re-organization efforts and how influence operations have been conducted reveal that this problem is not new. The most recent initiatives, to include efforts within the Department of State and the Department of Defense to establish entities responsible for conducting such operations, have faltered.

In Chapter II we review the history of influence operations in the past century in order to provide context for PSYOP's development. Chapter III discusses the current state of influence operations at the strategic level which sets the policy conditions for what is to be expected of PSYOP. In Chapter IV we review the current state of the U.S. Army Psychological Operations Regiment. Lastly, in Chapter V we present our recommendations for the reorganization of Psychological Operations in order that its potential strategic utility for influence operations be better harnessed.

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II. THE HISTORICAL CONTEXT OF PSYCHOLOGICAL OPERATIONS

1941—This is a task for the psychologist and social scientist rather than the orator. New and scientific methods of measuring and recording public opinion must be perfected. The ideals of democracy must be restated in fresh terms; the needs of today and tomorrow alike must be frankly faced and clearly defined; the nature of American history, traditions, and ideals must be made available in ways that increase realization.¹

1970—Yet, with the presence of an instant news and a world-information grid within which framework millions of people now live, fight, die, or survive, the U.S. government suffers from an impoverished, underfed international information program. It is tragically strange that in an era of continuing high national security costs and of continuing and sizable international commitments and programs, the psychological dimension of our international affairs remains largely fallow due to lack of properly applied funds, lack of insight, and lack of support.²

2016—Congress may explore whether current organizational and doctrinal constructs support the full integration of these capabilities to maximize their effects, and whether ongoing conceptual confusion has inhibited the DOD’s ability to respond to [information warfare] challenges. Another consideration may be the efficacy of [information warfare] as a military function or a whole-of-government responsibility.³

A. INTRODUCTION

Edward Bernays, a young publicist at the time of the First World War, recalled hearing about the government’s establishment of the Committee on Public Information (CPI). “It was the first time the U.S. used ideas as weapons of war,” he

¹ Arthur Upham Pope, “The Importance of Morale,” *Journal of Educational Sociology* 15, no. 4 (1941): 195–205.

² Edward L. Bernays and Burnet Hershey, eds., *The Case for Reappraisal of U.S. Overseas Information Policies and Programs: Incorporating Congressman Fascell’s Report* (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1970).

³ Catherine A. Theohary and Kathleen J. McInnis, *Information Warfare: Russian Activities* (CRS Insight No. IN10563) (Washington, D.C. Congressional Research Service, 2016), 2–3, <https://www.fas.org/sgp/crs/row/IN10563.pdf>.

recalled.”⁴ Mr. Bernays went on to become a legendary figure in the field of public relations, working for both the U.S. government and the private sector and promoting the discipline of public relations as an outgrowth of social science. Though he is most widely recognized for his accomplishments in the commercial industry, he was instrumental in the conduct of what we will term influence operations, using his talents to promote American strategic interests in World War I, World War II, and the Cold War.⁵ Interviewed on his 100th birthday in 1991, Mr. Bernays recounted some specific tactics of a WWI influence operation and recalled his realization that “if this could be used for war, it can be used for peace.”⁶ Since WWI, the Army’s capability to conduct influence operations through its PSYOP branch has developed against the backdrop of other government agencies responsible for influence operations coming and going as dictated by necessity and political will.

American politicians, bureaucrats, and military leaders have struggled for the last hundred years to determine the most effective methods of using information to influence the behavior of foreign audiences while keeping their domestic audiences informed but not unduly influenced. This tightrope walk of using information to achieve strategic aims on one hand, while maintaining openness in political discourse on the other has proved problematic time and again. It is a challenge for the U.S. government as a whole and the Department of Defense in particular, especially the U.S. Army Psychological Operations branch. Experiences in World War I, World War II, the Cold War, and other conflicts reflect a pattern of a significant amount of attention paid to influence operations when the nation is under threat and a waning of that attention during more peaceful times. As our

⁴ Glen Rifkin, “The Media Business; At 100, Public Relations’ Pioneer Criticizes Some of His Heirs,” *New York Times*, December 30, 1991.

⁵ **Influence Operations:** For the purposes of this study we are using the term influence operations to include both Public Diplomacy (PD) and Psychological Operations (PSYOP), also known as Military Information Support Operations (MISO). We believe that these two activities should not be separated, but need to be coordinated at the strategic level. Influence operations include other components, but we focus on PD and PSYOP due to overlap between them. In our experience, as both practitioners and students of this topic, we have seen instances of PD and PSYOP being coordinated in the US embassies where they host a Military Information Support Team (MIST). This relationship benefits both parties as the programs undertaken by either entity cannot achieve U.S. strategic goals without influence operations being mutually crafted and supported.

⁶ Rifkin, “The Media Business.”

nation has struggled with the appropriate use of the weapons of influence that have been developed over the past century, other global actors have forged ahead without wrestling with questions of propriety. Confronting this new reality, the United States must have properly devised policies and organizations in order to competently defend against the influence operations of hostile states or non-state actors.

B. THE FIRST WORLD WAR

Influence operations have been a part of military culture since the ancient world, through the Middle Ages, and into modernity. When the Tartars catapulted rotting, diseased bodies into the besieged city of Caffa in 1346,⁷ this undoubtedly had a psychological as well as a biological effect. Since the Revolutionary War, the United States has used information to shape perceptions and gain a military advantage. General George Washington has been credited as a master of using psychological ploys and deception in his campaigns against the British. Given their relative strength, compared to the British, the colonists used information successfully to portray the British as brutal oppressors, thereby gaining popular support.⁸ Modern American influence operations began in World War I. Influence operations during the First World War were managed by the Committee on Public Information (CPI), more commonly known as the Creel Committee. The Secretaries of State, War, and Navy sat on the committee, which was chaired by a journalist friend of President Wilson, George Creel.

Formed in April of 1917, the Creel Committee coordinated the activities of a myriad of associations, industries, and organizations for the purposes of supporting the nation's strategic aim of winning the war. Filmmakers, songwriters, advertisers, public speakers, cartoonists, alumni associations, and manufacturing guilds all contributed their talents to the cause and their products to the committee's representatives for approval.⁹

⁷ Mark Wheelis, "Biological Warfare at the 1346 Siege of Caffa," *Emerging Infectious Diseases* 8, no. 9 (September 2002): 971–75.

⁸ Robert J. Kodosky, *Psychological Operations American Style: The Joint United States Public Affairs Office, Vietnam and Beyond* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2007).

⁹ James Robert Mock and Cedric Larson, *Words that Won the War: The Story of the Committee on Public Information, 1917–1919* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1939), 66–74.

This was an all-hands, whole of government approach, at least in the eyes of the committee.

Despite the widespread reach of the CPI and the wholehearted support its efforts received from many quarters, the diplomatic corps and elements in Congress were decidedly unenthusiastic.¹⁰ Many members of Congress distrusted Mr. Creel due to his close relationship with President Wilson, and he returned the sentiment in public statements, disparaging those Congressmen who did not fully support the CPI.¹¹ The far-reaching activities of the committee did prompt a House Appropriations Committee investigation, a drastic reduction in the CPI's budget, and the closing of most CPI offices not long after the cessation of hostilities.

While the Committee on Public Information successfully raised public support for American involvement in World War I and developed many techniques that would serve influence professionals in future years, COL (Ret) Paul Linebarger, a World War II Psychological Warfare specialist, notes the distaste for propaganda that was the Creel Committee's legacy:

America emerged from the war disappointed at home and discredited abroad—so far as the heated propaganda of “making the world safe for democracy” was concerned. A more modest, more calculated national propaganda effort would have helped forestall those attitudes ... Creel and his fellow workers did not remember that beyond every war there lies a peace, in its own way as grim and difficult as war.¹²

With the CPI responsible for conducting influence operations in the civil sector during World War I, some within the armed forces began to see the utility of propaganda to help achieve military objectives. Individuals within the Military Intelligence Section, War Department General Staff undertook informal steps to plan and conduct influence

¹⁰ Thomas Sorenson, *The Word War: The Story of American Propaganda* (New York: Harper and Row, 1968), 6.

¹¹ Kodosky, *Psychological Operations American Style*; Sorenson, *The Word War*, 6; Sorenson, *The Word War*, 6.

¹² Paul Myron Anthony Linebarger, *Psychological Warfare* (Washington: Combat Forces Press, 2016).

operations.¹³ But the idea didn't gain momentum until Heber Blankenhorn, a journalist whose friends had tried to recruit him for the CPI, "became a firm believer in the efficacy of propaganda"¹⁴ and began discussing his ideas for using propaganda (the word had not yet gained the negative connotations of later years)¹⁵ for military purposes. His proposals for "combat propaganda, intelligence collection, the study of enemy civilian and military morale, and counter-propaganda" were compelling enough to earn him a direct commission into the Army as the captain in charge of the propaganda unit.¹⁶ First called the Psychologic Subsection of the Military Intelligence Branch, Blankenhorn's outfit was eventually designated G-2-D, Allied Expeditionary Force.

As with today's Psychological Operations Branch, the G-2-D sought personnel with cultural and linguistic acumen. It took several weeks to work out the unit's mission and purpose; the role of a military organization doing influence work had to be established, as did its relationship with the CPI. Ultimately, Army and Administration leaders decided that the unit belonged under military control and would be used for military purposes. Foreshadowing debates held in the ensuing decades, Secretary of War Newton Baker "insisted that the Army 'not drop just anybody's handbills' nor be a CPI 'messenger boy.'"¹⁷

The messages that G-2-D sent were varied, but focused on weakening the enemy's willingness to fight and lowering morale. The unit distributed millions of leaflets in "tactical campaigns of a strictly military nature aimed at securing immediate results."¹⁸ Though the leaflets fell short of relaying the ideals of Wilson's Fourteen

¹³ Clayton D. Laurie, "'The Chanting of Crusaders': Captain Heber Blankenhorn and AEF Combat Propaganda in World War I," *Journal of Military History* 59, no. 3 (1995): 457–82.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 461.

¹⁵ Elmer Davis, describing the mission of his Office of Wartime Information in 1943, outlined how Adolph Hitler, as a recipient of Allied propaganda in the First World War, adopted and refined propaganda techniques to such an extent that they became closely associated with fascism and totalitarianism. Mr. Davis acknowledged that "'Propaganda' is a word in bad odor in this country" (Elmer Davis, "OWI Has a Job," *Public Opinion Quarterly* 7, no. 1 (1943): 5–14).

¹⁶ Laurie, "'The Chanting of Crusaders.'"

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 464.

¹⁸ Kodosky, *Psychological Operations American Style*, 59.

Points that Blankenhorn had hoped to use against the enemy, they were effective enough to draw the attention of the German General Staff. General Erich Ludendorff characterized Allied propaganda as “exceptionally clever” work that “hypnotized” Germany, and another official wrote that it “had shaken the foundations of the Central Powers in a way impossible with conventional military forces.”¹⁹

The G-2-D’s leaflets set the pattern for military influence operations in years to come, focusing on the tactical level of war with surrender appeals and morale-weakening messages. At the war’s end, the unit was quickly dismantled, and its personnel sent elsewhere. As an organization, G-2-D was shifted within sections of the Army’s Military Intelligence Division, but ceased to exist by 1925. “G-2-D was quickly forgotten during the interwar years,” and the lessons learned during the Great War would have to be learned again.²⁰

Following World War I, men like George Creel, Edward Bernays, and Heber Blankenhorn went back to marketing, public relations, or journalism and civilian life, often honing the skills they had practiced while supporting the nation’s strategic aims. Propaganda and using tools of influence over the masses became the purview of communist, fascist, and totalitarian governments, while the United States government left developments in these and associated fields to the private sector. U.S. concern with influence began to increase only as Nazi Germany made inroads in Latin America and Europe. Only then did President Roosevelt and his administration see the need for organizations to conduct influence operations, both at home and abroad.

C. THE SECOND WORLD WAR

Many organizations, in various agencies and departments, were established and disestablished in the period preceding America’s entry into World War II. Tellingly, one of Linebarger’s diagrams depicting influence organizations in the early war years

¹⁹ Mark Cornwall, *The Undermining of Austria-Hungary: The Battle for Hearts and Minds*, (New York: St. Martin’s Press Inc., 2000), 223.

²⁰ Laurie, ““The Chanting of Crusaders.””

(Figure 1) includes a block labeled “Anybody Who Felt Like Trying.”²¹ The civil organizations that endured, both the Office of War Information (OWI) and the Office of Strategic Services (OSS), were established in 1942.²²

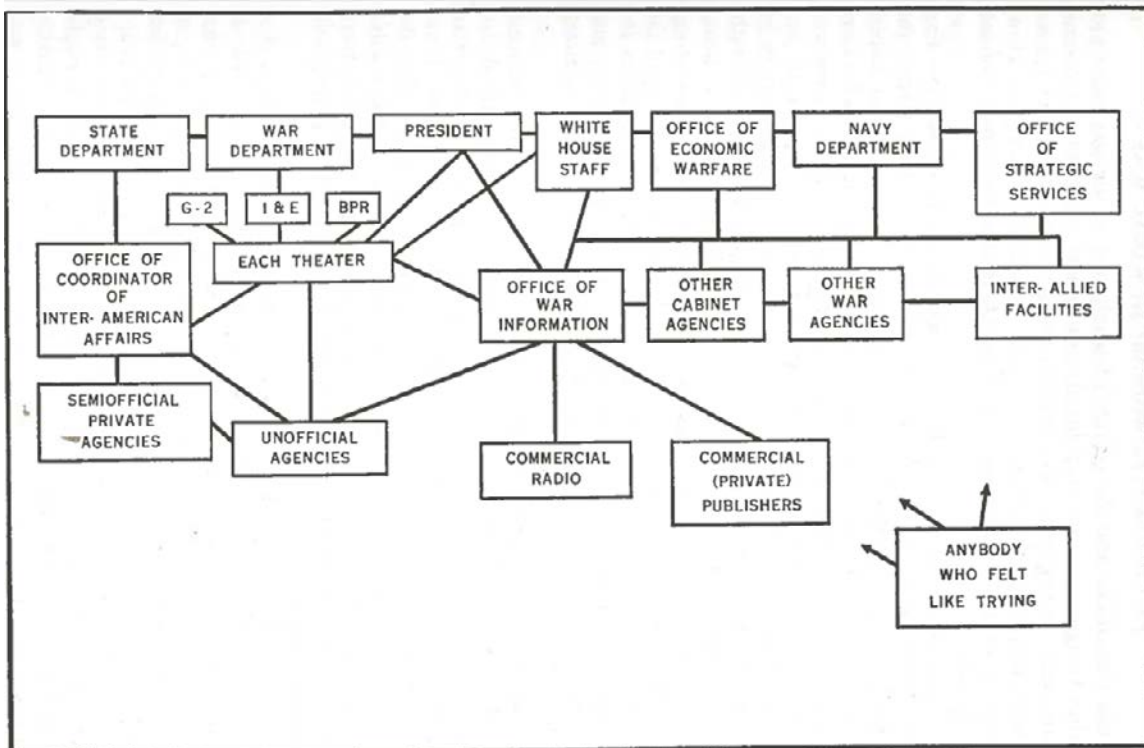


Chart 1 (Source: The author's observations.)

Figure 1. “Anybody Who Felt Like Trying”²³

²¹ Linebarger, *Psychological Warfare*, 92.

²² Alfred H. Paddock, *U.S. Army Special Warfare: Its Origins*, rev. ed. (Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas, 2002), 4.

²³ Linebarger, *Psychological Warfare*, 92.

The Office of War Information was headed by Elmer Davis, a journalist appointed to the post by President Roosevelt. Mr. Davis considered his agency an important part of the war effort, and related its mission to the psychological warfare actions of Ghengis Khan, Benjamin Franklin, and contemporary fascist enemies.²⁴ Because those enemies used propaganda so extensively, many officials were skeptical and reluctant to create a single body to conduct influence operations. But the need to coordinate the use of information for strategic purposes became increasingly obvious. Prior to the June 1942 formation of the OWI, several disparate organizations had been given mandates to use information and conduct influence operations. The extent of those operations and the audiences involved varied according to the agency, as did attitudes regarding the mission and the manner in which it was to be conducted. The Office of Facts and Figures (established October 1941), for example, was headed by the poet Archibald Macleish and staffed by men of literature and letters dedicated to “explain[ing] to Americans why the United States would have to fight the coming war.”²⁵ The Office of Government Reports (established July 1939) likewise concerned itself with a domestic audience, conducting liaison activities between the federal government and state governments and the general public.²⁶ Influence operations directed at audiences outside of the United States came under the purview of the Coordinator of Information (COI, established July 1941), specifically the Foreign Information Service office. These three organizations, along with the Division of Information from the Office of Emergency Management, moved into and formed the core of the OWI. Figure 2 illustrates the transformation of varied agencies into the OWI organization.

²⁴ Davis, “OWI Has a Job,” 6.

²⁵ Sydney Weinberg, “What to Tell America: The Writers’ Quarrel in the Office of War Information,” *Journal of American History* 55, no. 1 (1968): 76.

²⁶ Lester G. Hawkins Jr. and George S. Pettee, “OWI—Organization and Problems,” *Public Opinion Quarterly* 7, no. 1 (1943): 16.

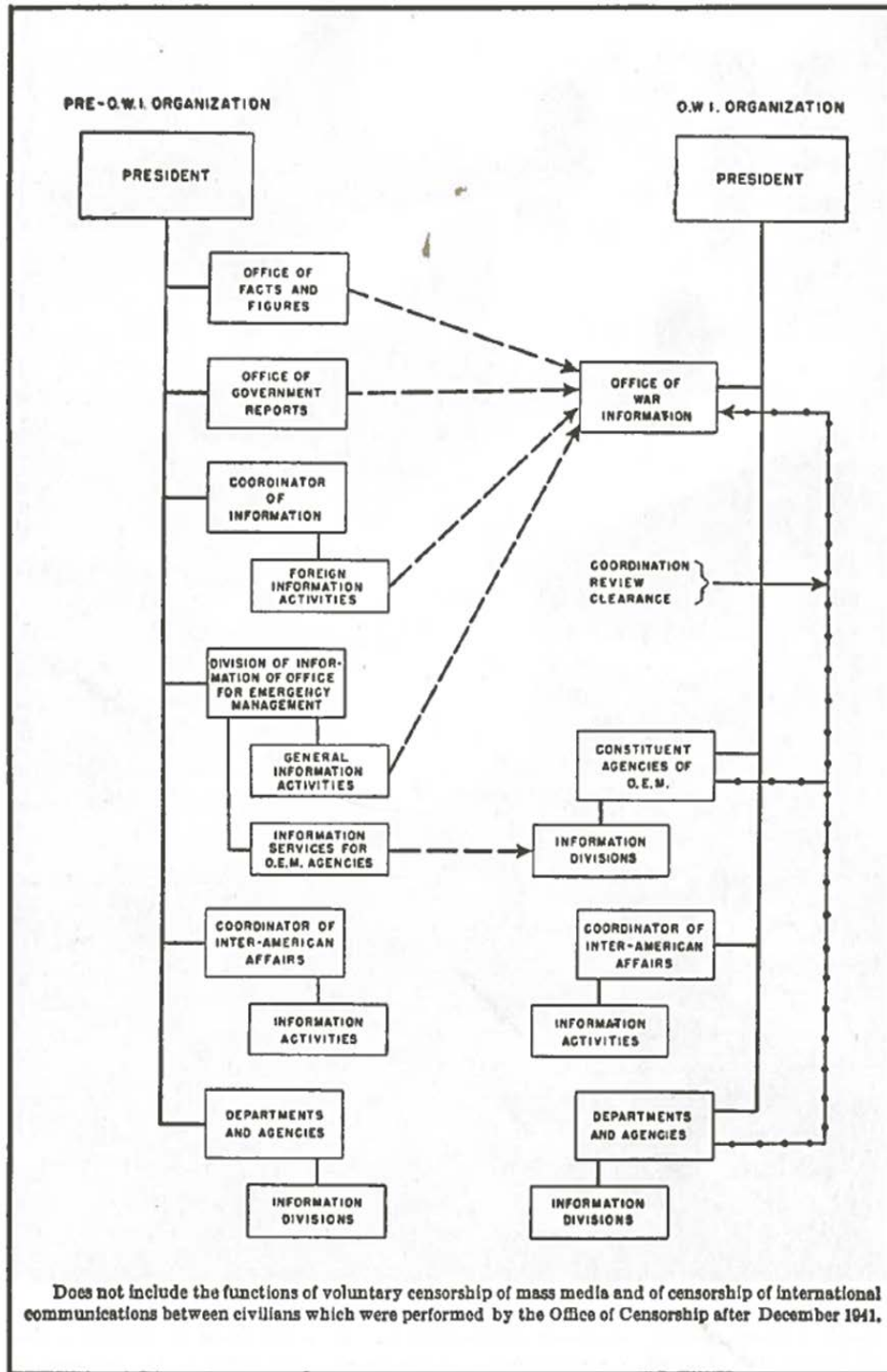


Figure 2. Formation of the OWI²⁷

²⁷ Linebarger, *Psychological Warfare*, 95.

Like the Creel Committee, the OWI leveraged communicators from industry, filmmakers, radio broadcasters, journalists, artists, and writers. As director, Elmer Davis was dedicated to using truthful information as a weapon; he disdained lies and outright manipulation of information to suit a message's purpose. This philosophy applied whether the audience was domestic or foreign. In addition to communicating to the American public, Davis had the OWI direct its efforts towards four distinct audiences overseas: "the enemy, our Allies in both the free and the occupied nations, neutral countries, and the American armed forces outside the continental limits of the United States."²⁸ The OWI maintained close cooperation with the military information services, primarily for the purposes of building morale among the troops.

The head of the Office of Strategic Services, Colonel William Donovan, sought to use information quite differently from his civilian counterpart at the OWI. Colonel Donovan envisioned influence operations that drew heavily on intelligence and would use the knowledge gained to conduct operations directed against enemy propaganda and military capabilities. His pre-OSS experience as the Coordinator of Information reflects this, as he first established that organization's intelligence capability, then set about creating its propaganda division, the Foreign Information Service.²⁹

For Donovan, the role of propaganda was "as a weapon of deception and subversion, [which] should be under military supervision."³⁰ This put him at odds with his FIS chief, whose views were more in line with those of Davis and MacLeish. President Roosevelt's Executive Order creating the OWI settled the matter; "COI became OSS and FIS became a division of the Office of War Information."³¹ This change also put the newly created OSS under the authority of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, where "Donovan continued to assume some psychological warfare functions for his Office of

²⁸ Davis, "OWI Has a Job," 11.

²⁹ Edward Hymoff, *The OSS in World War II* (New York: Ballantine Books, 2016), 45.

³⁰ Paddock, *U.S. Army Special Warfare*, 5, quoting Corey Ford.

³¹ Hymoff, *The OSS in World War II*, 46.

Strategic Services.”³² These functions, according to Linebarger, were intelligence, black propaganda operations, and subversive operations.³³ The OSS continued these activities throughout the war.

While the government’s influence operations-related organizations underwent various permutations on the way toward the establishment of the OWI and OSS, elements within the military were also working toward a dedicated influence operations capability. There had been none since the G-2-D was disbanded after the First World War, and only one serving officer, Colonel Charles Mason, had wartime experience in influence operations.³⁴ Mason’s efforts to generate interest in redeveloping those capabilities went unheeded. The rekindling of an interest in influence came instead from a civilian, Assistant Secretary of War John McCloy, who had the War Department’s assistant chief of staff, G-2 form a group to study the subject. The study group, not surprisingly, reported that there were no concerted efforts to analyze or counteract enemy propaganda.

Following this 1941 study, the Military Intelligence Service (MIS) eventually established a Psychological Warfare Branch under Colonel Oscar Solbert, but

With the establishment of OWI, Colonel Solbert’s office fissiparated like an amoeba; the civilian half of Psychological Warfare Branch, with a few officers, went over to OWI to be a brain-trust for the foreign broadcast experts, who failed to welcome this accession of talent; the military half remained as an MIS agency until 31 December, 1943, when OWI abolished its half and MIS cooperated by wiping out the other, leaving the War Department in the middle of a war with no official psychological warfare agency whatever, merely some liaison officers.³⁵

Linebarger, who was a staff officer detailed from the War Department to OWI, recounts that the organizational confusion described above continued through the first years of the war until it had become, by 1945, “a large, well run, well-integrated organization.”³⁶

³² Paddock, *U.S. Army Special Warfare*, 5.

³³ Linebarger, *Psychological Warfare*, 93.

³⁴ Paddock, *U.S. Army Special Warfare*, 6.

³⁵ Linebarger, *Psychological Warfare*, 94.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 97.

Paddock also describes territorial battles among agencies, describing at least four general staff-level committees that studied how best to approach influence operations. Both authors note that the lack of coordinated planning at the highest levels left much of the work of influence operations to theater-level commands, per a JCS directive that predated the dissolution of the Psychological Warfare Branch.

It was this latitude at the theater level that allowed Brigadier General Robert McClure to develop the influence operations capabilities that eventually led to the modern U.S. Special Operations Forces (SOF). In 1942, after having served as military attaché to several exiled European governments in London, McClure took charge of the newly created Information and Censorship Section (INC) of the Allied Force Headquarters (AFHQ). In this position, he “consolidate[d] several functions for which most Army officers had little preparation: public relations, censorship, and psychological warfare – the latter organized into a psychological warfare branch.”³⁷ Later, in 1944, General Eisenhower appointed McClure the director of the Psychological Warfare Division of the Supreme Headquarters, Allied Expeditionary Force (PWD/SHAEF), a position from which he (and deputies representing the OWI and OSS as well as two British civilian agencies) controlled and coordinated influence operations throughout the European theater.³⁸ Top commanders such as General George Patton acknowledged that PWD’s tactical successes, with hundreds of thousands of leaflet-inspired German troops having surrendered and enemy morale severely diminished, contributed to the Allied victory: “psychological warfare had an important place in the European Command. It can accomplish much good.”³⁹

³⁷ Paddock, *U.S. Army Special Warfare*, 11.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 12.

³⁹ Stanley Sandler, “*Cease Resistance: It’s Good For You!*”: *A History of U.S. Army Combat Psychological Operations*, 2nd ed. (Washington, D.C.: United States Army Special Operations Command, Directorate of History and Museums, 1999).

D. THE COLD WAR

The OWI was shut down shortly after World War II. This reflected Elmer Davis' conception of the office as lasting only 'for the duration' of the mission. Davis believed OWI, while critical during the war, had no role to play afterward.⁴⁰ In contrast, Donovan's OSS continued to conduct both influence and intelligence operations. The end of the war brought significant administrative turmoil to the U.S. government as wartime agencies like the OWI were decommissioned. Members of the public and the government saw a need to continue some activities that had been initiated during the war; Donovan, for instance, went to considerable lengths to ensure that the intelligence-gathering functions of the OSS were established in a new national agency.⁴¹ But, significantly, neither he nor anyone else in government made a similar effort toward forming an agency to conduct influence operations, at least not immediately following the war.

The task of communicating the United States' messages to the world fell instead to the State Department, which had inherited Voice of America and other radio broadcast responsibilities upon the dissolution of the OWI. Government information services were largely perceived as wartime measures, though, and the American public (and members of Congress) were wary of having any agency conduct information, much less influence, operations. These misgivings grew as the Department of State (DOS) expanded its cultural and educational exchanges in the years following the war, with some considerable consternation created by DOS's funding of art exhibitions which some thought did not fairly represent American ideals or values.⁴²

In 1948, the Congress approved the U.S. Information and Educational Exchange Act (Public Law 402; 80th Congress), popularly known as the Smith-Mundt Act, "because the progress of the Cold War convinced Congress that the United States

⁴⁰ Davis, "OWI Has a Job," 5.

⁴¹ Larry Valero, "'We Need Our New OSS, Our New General Donovan, Now ...': The Public Discourse over American Intelligence, 1944–53," *Intelligence and National Security* 18, no. 1 (January 1, 2003): 91–118.

⁴² Burton Paulu, "The Smith-Mundt Act: A Legislative History," *Journalism and Mass Communication Quarterly* 30, no. 3 (1953): 306.

Government needed to engage in international information and educational exchange activities on a global scale.”⁴³ In actuality, the act codified the misgivings that many felt regarding the establishment of an agency to conduct influence operations and limited the extent of these activities. “Americans insisted that government efforts at persuasion at home...should remain benign, affirming their popular belief that government should not be the guardian of the public conscience.”⁴⁴ The Smith-Mundt Act authorized the creation of an information service and an educational exchange service, but it did not specify the organization or agency responsible for overseeing those programs. The five years following the passage of Smith-Mundt saw multiple organizations and agencies proposed (or even temporarily created and staffed) as the government moved toward the creation of an organization that would take ownership of existing information-related programs, such as the Voice of America (VOA), and be responsible for new ones.

The need for such an organization was made clear by the actions of the Soviet Union, which actively sought to spread communist ideology.⁴⁵ Unfortunately, international communism, or the fear of it, made the creation of a new influence organization more difficult, as many of the intellectuals and artists who staffed the various precursor agencies were regarded with suspicion by Senator Joseph McCarthy and others. Several inquiries into exactly how the nation conducted its influence operations were capped by President Eisenhower’s creation of the President’s Committee on International Information Activities, better known as the Jackson Committee (after its chair, former Deputy Director of Central Intelligence William Jackson).⁴⁶ The Jackson committee presented its recommendations to the president at the end of June, 1953, and, on August 3rd, Eisenhower created the organization that would conduct the nation’s

⁴³ Ibid., 314.

⁴⁴ Allen W. Palmer and Edward L. Carter, “The Smith-Mundt Act’s Ban on Domestic Propaganda: An Analysis of the Cold War Statute Limiting Access to Public Diplomacy,” *Communication Law and Policy* 11, no. 1 (2006): 3; decades later, the act’s prohibition on influencing domestic audiences would have operational consequences with the advent of the World Wide Web by inhibiting U.S. Army PSYOPers from using that medium to reach target audiences.

⁴⁵ Christopher M. Andrew, *The World Was Going Our Way: The KGB and the Battle for the Third World* (New York: Basic Books, 2016), 1–4.

⁴⁶ Sorenson, *The Word War*, 41.

influence operations for nearly fifty years: the United States Information Agency (USIA).

The mission of the USIA, as given to the new agency by President Eisenhower, was:

To submit evidence to peoples of other nations by means of communication techniques that the objectives and policies of the United States are in harmony with and will advance their legitimate aspirations for freedom, progress, and peace.⁴⁷

The agency would do this through a variety of techniques under the direction of Theodore Streibert, a businessman with experience in the film and radio broadcasting industries who had also been an overseas consultant to the Voice of America. The new USIA director sat, at the president's request, on the Operations Coordinating Board, a policy-making group chaired by the Undersecretary of State which included the heads or undersecretaries of Defense, the Foreign Aid Agency, and the CIA, "a compact group attending weekly luncheon meetings," Mr. Streibert later recalled.⁴⁸ The fact that he also had a monthly personal meeting with the president attests to the importance that the new agency held for the Eisenhower administration.

From the beginning, the USIA drew on expertise from other government agencies and the private sector. Legacy programs such as periodical publishing, overseas libraries, radio and television broadcasting, and film distribution, which had been managed by an alphabet soup of entities in the years prior to the establishment of USIA were all subsumed into the agency. Streibert was a proponent of involving "American business, labor, and other nongovernmental services"⁴⁹ in USIA's activities; he was assisted in this effort by Edward Bernays, who, as a private-sector public relations expert, headed the National Committee for an Adequate U.S. Overseas Information Program, a 28-member

⁴⁷ Ibid., 49.

⁴⁸ Lois Herrmann, Theresa Markiw, and Frances Sullinger, eds., *The United States Information Agency—A Commemoration* (United States Information Agency, 1999), <http://dosfan.lib.uic.edu/usia/abtusia/commins.pdf>, 20.

⁴⁹ Sorenson, *The Word War*, 51.

group of industry leaders who supported the fledgling agency.⁵⁰ This integration of government agencies, non-governmental organizations, and private sector support mirrored, for the Cold War, the type of national effort that was made during the world wars. However, one difference was that the ideological struggle with the Soviet Union was fought on very different battlefields, for a much longer time, and on a larger scale.

Though the USIA was seated in Washington, DC, and its bureaucratic and administrative activities there were vital to the organization's existence and success, the bulk of the agency's work was done by its Foreign Service Officers (FSO) working in the field overseas, where the agency was known as the United States Information Service (USIS). These men and women made the vital cultural connections that enabled them to understand how to relate to and reach their target audiences. In this, they were aided by Foreign Service Nationals (FSN), local partners who made up the bulk of the agency's overseas work force.⁵¹ Together, the FSOs and FSNs organized and executed influence operations such as:

- The 1959 American National Exhibition in Moscow, which became famous for the Nixon-Khrushchev "kitchen debate."⁵²
- Educational and feature films that were the first Vietnamese-language films ever made.⁵³
- Lectures and tours by countless American writers, poets, artists, and performers.
- "During [the Cuban Missile Crisis], USIA was present at the highest level policy-making group, and the Agency did a magnificent job of supporting U.S. policy"⁵⁴ by making recommendations on how to communicate the U.S. position to the world.

⁵⁰ Herrmann, Markiw, and Sullinger, *The United States Information Agency*, 15.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 14; Sorenson, *The Word War*, 57.

⁵² Herrmann, Markiw, and Sullinger, *The United States Information Agency*, 17.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, 19.

⁵⁴ Herrmann, Markiw, and Sullinger, *The United States Information Agency*, 26.

- Publication of comic strips, books, and magazines on a variety of topics (e.g.-language, travel, political science); one series, *Problems of Communism*, was published continuously for forty years.⁵⁵
- Sporting events and overseas visits by champion American athletes, “coaches, sports administrators, and sports medicine specialists.”⁵⁶

The Cold War was not the USIA’s only concern during its 46 years as the nation’s primary influence operations agency. During the Vietnam War, the fighting was hot, and the USIA, relying on its years of experience working with a variety of local partners to counteract communist influence, stepped into the fray. As the war in Vietnam escalated in the early 1960s and counterinsurgency emerged as the primary means of fighting the war, both military and civil leaders recognized the need for coordinated influence operations. While military efforts in the Republic of Vietnam (RVN) increased, “the role played by the USIA expanded as well.”⁵⁷ In early 1965, the leaders of the U.S. Agency for International Development’s Communications Media Division (one of USIA’s partners), the military’s psychological operations directorate, and USIA’s Saigon bureau devised a partnership which was proposed to the National Security Council by the USIA director.⁵⁸ The result was the Joint United States Public Affairs Office (JUSPAO), a unique combination of civilian agency and Army personnel responsible for “nothing more—and nothing less—than the whole process of communications in a wartime situation.”⁵⁹

The ranks of USIA personnel in Vietnam swelled as the mission drew FSOs from other countries around the globe. As many as a third of the USIA personnel “went into direct psychological operations in support of massive ‘pacification’ and ‘Revolutionary Development’ programs”⁶⁰ where they worked side by side with U.S Army PSYOP

⁵⁵ Ibid., 36.

⁵⁶ Ibid., 49.

⁵⁷ Kodosky, *Psychological Operations American Style*, 16.

⁵⁸ Herrmann, Markiw, and Sullinger, *The United States Information Agency*, 35.

⁵⁹ JUSPAO director Barry Zorthian, quoted in Kodosky, *Psychological Operations American Style*, 16.

⁶⁰ Sorenson, *The Word War*, 283.

personnel in dangerous and remote areas. The JUSPAO also worked with the RVN's Vietnamese Information Service (VIS), though these local partners did not execute the mission with as much vigor or expertise as their American counterparts expected.⁶¹

Unfortunately, over the course of the war, the JUSPAO's focus turned from influencing local audiences to efforts to assist American and foreign journalists in their reporting of the war. This led to a separation among the military mission, psychological operations aimed at pacifying the population, and JUSPAO's focus on public relations.⁶² By 1966, the USIA director (Leonard Marks, at that time) decided it would be best for the agency to distance itself from "psywarfare" and leave that portion of the influence operation effort to the military.⁶³ The JUSPAO continued operations in Vietnam until the end of the war, and was instrumental in the Chieu Hoi returnee program, aimed at inducing Vietcong fighters to defect. The program's policies were centrally planned, but field organizations planned its operations. Over the course of five years (1966-71), the Chieu Hoi program neutralized about one-fifth as many VC as were killed or captured during the same period.⁶⁴

When assessing JUSPAO, the USIA concluded:

There is no U.S. government agency truly qualified and staffed to conduct psychological operations in a war of this size. USIA comes closest, but to do its job properly requires men and money far in excess of what is available in "peacetime."⁶⁵

The melding of civil and military influence operations in the Joint United States Public Affairs Office led to difficulties for all concerned, chief among them a loss of credibility in the eyes of the domestic and foreign press. Following the Vietnam War, the USIA reoriented itself to its other ongoing influence operations around the world, and PSYOP

⁶¹ Ibid., 284. In discussing the Vietnam era, we can no longer refer solely to USIA because, as Sorenson puts it, "JUSPAO was unprecedented in its integration of civilian and military personnel."

⁶² Kodosky, *Psychological Operations American Style*, 185.

⁶³ Ibid., 191.

⁶⁴ Frank L. Goldstein and Benjamin F. Findley, Jr., *Psychological Operations: Principles and Case Studies* (Maxwell Air Force Base, AL: Air University Press, 1996), 134.

⁶⁵ Sorenson, *The Word War*, 292.

fieldcraft withered. In fact, the 1990 Department of Defense *Psychological Master Plan* noted that “The end of the United States’ involvement in the Vietnam War marked the beginning of a decade-long period of decline and atrophy of military psychological operations (PSYOP) capabilities.”⁶⁶

The USIA continued its efforts through the era of détente and into the 1980s, with the broadcasts of the Voice of America and Radio Liberty piercing the heart and soul of the communist world. Puddington holds that these broadcasts were “one of the most successful institutions of America’s Cold War effort, and made an important contribution to the peaceful nature of communism’s demise.”⁶⁷ When the Berlin Wall fell in November of 1989, USIA ensured that this news was disseminated via all of its media outlets. This also turned out to be the agency’s death knell. The Eastern Bloc countries opened their borders with the West and the Soviet Union broke apart within a few years. Ten year later, the USIA was folded into the State Department, and the Voice of America (VOA) and other broadcast outlets became part of the independent Broadcasting Board of Governors (BBG).⁶⁸ Just as it had occurred during the period between the world wars, as well as during the brief lull following the Second World War, absent a foe, the United States no longer seemed to feel the need to concern itself with influence operations.⁶⁹

E. CONCLUSION

Over the past century of American involvement in open conflict and Cold War, one sees in the nation’s use of influence operations several recurring patterns.

- Washington will increase use of influence operations when the United States faces a clear enemy and quickly decrease or stop using them when open hostilities diminish.

⁶⁶ Secretary of Defense, *Department of Defense Psychological Operations Master Plan*, Washington, DC: Secretary of Defense, February 10, 1990, ii.

⁶⁷ Arch Puddington, *Broadcasting Freedom: The Cold War Triumph of Radio Free Europe and Radio Liberty* (Lexington, KY: The University Press of Kentucky, 2000), 313.

⁶⁸ Christopher Ross, “Public Diplomacy Comes of Age,” *Washington Quarterly* 25, no. 2 (June 1, 2002): 78.

⁶⁹ Works like Scott Shane’s *Dismantling Utopia: How Information Ended the Soviet Union* highlight the necessity of having a national level organization prepared to respond to strategic opportunities best addressed with influence operations. Coordinated messaging capabilities across a variety of civil and military organizations may be required and cannot be created overnight.

- Americans dislike the very idea of using influence operations, shying away from the word ‘propaganda.’
- High-echelon leaders and agencies struggle to construct and adhere to a unified effort when it comes to both organization and message.
- Military expertise in influence operations is underutilized, often invested in surrender appeals and the undermining of enemy morale but little else.

Despite the potential benefits of well-planned and well-executed influence operations, leaders seem reluctant to fully support organizations capable of conducting them. In 1943, Elmer Davis laid out the Office of Wartime Information’s mission by saying “to Allied countries and the occupied nations we have to tell the story of what America is doing and what America is getting ready to do, to tell them the story of American production and to make them realize that we are going to win.”⁷⁰ Worth noting is that no one recently (2016) has made an equivalent statement regarding the mission of influence professionals. Perhaps this is because, fifteen years into the Global War on Terror, we no longer see ourselves facing the kind of threat that prompted formation of Creel’s CPI or Davis’ OWI?

In his history of Special Warfare, Paddock notes that it is often the “intervention of senior governmental civilians [which prods] hesitant and cautious uniformed Army leaders into taking action on concepts of an unconventional nature.”⁷¹ One has to wonder: where is the desire today on the part of civilian leaders to push (or enable) the military to unleash the full potential of the influence operations organizations it already possesses?

Writing about the formation of the USIA in 1953, Rubin remarks that concepts about information programs at the time were “defensive” and the programs were perceived as “a holding action.”⁷² These attitudes obviously changed as the Cold War with the Soviet Union progressed, with the USIA becoming more or less aggressive as

⁷⁰ Davis, “OWI Has a Job,” 12.

⁷¹ Paddock, *U.S. Army Special Warfare*, 6.

⁷² Ronald I. Rubin, *The Objectives of the U.S. Information Agency: Controversies and Analysis* (New York: Praeger, 2016), 110.

international relations warranted. Today, the United States has no such entity and lacks a national influence operations agency, even though the Jackson Committee noted over half a century ago that “there is a ‘psychological’ aspect or implication to every diplomatic, economic, or military policy and action” and that those aspects or implications need to be considered and coordinated for maximum advantage.⁷³

Testifying before the House of Representatives in 1968, with over half a century of influence operations experience, both public and private, behind him, Edward Bernays exhorted policymakers to reevaluate and overhaul USIA’s policies and practices. He specifically recommended establishing “immediate, intermediate, and long-range programs” based on social science; research on national psychologies, attitudes, and culture as the basis for action; strategies informed by social sciences; and tactics following objectives, research, and strategy.⁷⁴ A half century after his testimony, it seems curious that no one has echoed Bernays, particularly given all the places the United States is fighting today.

⁷³ Sorenson, *The Word War*, 44.

⁷⁴ Bernays and Hershey, *The Case for Reappraisal of U.S. Overseas Information Policies and Programs*, 126.

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III. FURTHER LOSS OF FOCUS SINCE THE DISSOLUTION OF THE USIA

A. A QUESTION OF TERMS

There has not been a successfully sustained coordinated effort to synchronize strategic influence operations at the national level since the dissolution of the USIA in 1999.⁷⁵ While the USIA was not a perfect organization, it provided the government with an agency to coordinate the use of information as an element of national power in ways that other departments could not. The Departments of State and Defense both use information to conduct some types of influence operations, but they have other primary missions. During the Cold War, when the USIA was active, the United States' rivalry with the Soviet Union and the People's Republic of China (PRC) enabled the drawing of a stark contrast between the United States and its communist rivals. Since the fall of the Soviet Union, the U.S. has lacked a clear adversary against whom it could develop a politically palatable narrative. The USIA was shuttered once large scale U.S. strategic influence efforts were no longer thought to be necessary. This movement away from the concept of conducting influence operations has been reflected by shifts in the terminology that government entities use to refer to the subject.

One potential bright spot for anyone who believed the U.S. government still needed a coherent strategy for influence operations was the introduction of the now-defunct term, Strategic Communications. Officially approved for Department of Defense (DOD) use in December of 2006, the definition of Strategic Communications was:

focused US Government efforts to understand and engage key audiences in order to create, strengthen, or preserve conditions favorable for the advancement of US Government interests, policies, and objectives through the use of coordinated programs, plans, themes, messages, and products synchronized with the actions of all instruments of national power.⁷⁶

⁷⁵ Robert R. Reilly, "No Substitute for Substance," *The Journal of International Security Affairs* 17 (Fall 2009): 9–17.

⁷⁶ Eric V. Larson et al., *Foundations of Effective Influence Operations: A Framework for Enhancing Army Capabilities* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 2009), 3, <http://www.rand.org/pubs/monographs/MG654.html>.

The adoption of the term Strategic Communications and the acknowledgement of the importance of synchronizing among all instruments of national power shows that there were at least some in the Department of Defense who believed in influence operations at a strategic level.

However, Strategic Communications never achieved a prominent place in DOD, fell out of favor in 2012, and no longer exists in the U.S. government's lexicon. Some have described the cessation of using the term as a victory for senior Public Affairs officials. As senior DOD official, Rosa Brooks, described the skirmish, it was:

between those who believe that strategic communication is merely an unnecessary euphemism for “communications”—meaning, basically, press statements and talking points—and thus should be controlled by public affairs offices, and those who believe strategic communication is a confusing term, but one that has nonetheless come to stand for something complex and important, something that has more to do with strategy than with communications.⁷⁷

The emergence of the term Strategic Communications and then its quick demise demonstrate that there truly is a difference between what senior officials say is important and what actually happens.

Interestingly, however, NATO still uses the term Strategic Communications and has a specific office called the NATO Strategic Communications Centre of Excellence. NATO defines Strategic Communications as “the coordinated and appropriate use of NATO communications activities and capabilities in support of Alliance policies, operations and activities, and in order to advance NATO's aims.”⁷⁸ The core capabilities to conduct NATO Strategic Communications are Public Diplomacy, Public Affairs, Military Public Affairs, Information Operations, and Psychological Operations.⁷⁹ With NATO being such an important U.S. partner, and Strategic Communications being

⁷⁷ Steve Tatham, *U.S. Governmental Information Operations and Strategic Communications: A Discredited Tool or User Failure? Implications for Future Conflict*, Monograph (Carlisle Barracks, PA: U.S. Army War College Strategic Studies Institute, December 2013), 6, <http://www.strategicstudiesinstitute.army.mil/pubs/display.cfm?pubID=1182>.

⁷⁸ “About Strategic Communications,” NATO Strategic Communications Centre of Excellence, accessed October 20, 2016, <http://www.stratcomcoe.org/about-strategic-communications>.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*

relevant to NATO, why is Strategic Communications not good enough for the U.S. Government lexicon? At a minimum, we might ensue by saying that strategic influence operations are in disarray across the U.S. government, that reengaging in the debate about Strategic Communications would be worthwhile.

“Information Warfare” is another popular term that has no formal definition in DOD doctrine or the government lexicon. In his essay entitled “What is Information Warfare?,” Martin C. Libicki argues there is no inclusive definition for Information Warfare, but offers seven distinct forms of Information Warfare.⁸⁰ While, according to Libicki, Information Warfare includes PSYOP, we believe that Public Diplomacy could also be included as a component of Information Warfare. This problem of what should be included under Information Warfare is not new, as a recent Congressional Research Service Insight makes clear:

Congress may explore whether current organizational and doctrinal constructs support the full integration of these [information warfare] capabilities to maximize their effects, and whether ongoing conceptual confusion has inhibited DOD’s ability to respond to [information warfare] challenges. Another consideration may be the efficacy of [information warfare] as a military function or a whole-of-government responsibility.⁸¹

At least according to the CRS, Information Warfare is not solely a DOD function and other U.S. government departments and agencies are necessary to effectively wage Information Warfare.

⁸⁰ Martin C. Libicki, *What Is Information Warfare?* (Washington, DC: Center for Advanced Concepts and Technology Institute for National Strategic Studies: National Defense University, August 1995), x. The seven forms of Information Warfare as described by Libicki are, “(i) command-and-control warfare (which strikes against the enemy’s head and neck), (ii) intelligence-based warfare (which consists of the design, protection, and denial of systems that seek sufficient knowledge to dominate the battlespace), (iii) electronic warfare (radio-electronic or cryptographic techniques), (iv) psychological warfare (in which information is used to change the minds of friends, neutrals, and foes), (v) “hacker” warfare (in which computer systems are attacked), (vi) economic information warfare (blocking information or channeling it to pursue economic dominance), and (vii) cyberwarfare (a grab bag of futuristic scenarios).”

⁸¹ Theohary and McInnis, *Information Warfare: Russian Activities*.

B. CURRENT SYNCHRONIZER OF INFLUENCE OPERATIONS

Senior officials in the DOD acknowledge the necessity of synchronizing operations in the information environment at the strategic level. In a recent hearing on PSYOP before the House Armed Services Committee (HASC) on October 22, 2015 the then Assistant Secretary of Defense for Special Operations and Low Intensity Conflict, Michael D. Lumpkin, stated:

Whereas lethal and destructive combat capabilities tend to belong exclusively to the Department [of Defense], other U.S. government departments and agencies, such as the Broadcasting Board of Governors and the Department of State, have capabilities, roles, and missions as part of our government's strategic communications efforts.⁸²

He highlighted the unique challenges faced by the PSYOP force and stated that, in the information environment, the Department of Defense often serves in a supporting role to the Department of State. Furthermore, he emphasized the need for “close interagency coordination and clear delineation of the appropriate roles for each organization.”⁸³ While Mr. Lumpkin touted the need for coordination at a strategic level and briefly mentioned a “framework” whereby the coordination should happen, he offered little detail.

It has been our operational experience that interactions between the Department of Defense and Department of State for strategic influence occur at the tactical level in response to a crisis rather than proactively, as part of pre-planned strategic engagement. As of this writing, a national influence strategy has not been published. In the absence of such a strategy, it is impossible to gain unity of effort among disparate organizations conducting influence operations.

One specific organization that Mr. Lumpkin mentioned in his testimony before the HASC was the Center for Strategic Counterterrorism Communications (CSCC),

⁸² Michael D. Lumpkin, “Countering Adversarial Propaganda: Charting an Effective Course in the Contested Information Environment,” statement at a hearing before the Subcommittee on Emerging Threats and Capabilities, Committee on Armed Services, House of Representatives, 114th Congress, 2015.

⁸³ *Ibid.*

housed within the Department of State. According to Executive Order 13584 the CSCC's mission is to:

coordinate, orient, and inform Government-wide public communications activities directed at audiences abroad and targeted against violent extremists and terrorist organizations, especially al-Qa'ida and its affiliates and adherents, with the goal of using communication tools to reduce radicalization by terrorists and extremist violence and terrorism that threaten the interests and national security of the United States.⁸⁴

This was reinforced by the issuance of Executive Order 13721, five years later in 2016, which renamed the CSCC as the Global Engagement Center (GEC) and restated the mission as “[The GEC] shall lead the coordination, integration, and synchronization of Government-wide communications activities directed at foreign audiences abroad in order to counter the messaging and diminish the influence of international terrorist organizations.”⁸⁵ ⁸⁶ This mission and this organization were assigned to be the missing link to successfully synchronize influence operations at the strategic level. But, for many reasons, the CSCC/GEC has not been able to be the strategic integrator of influence operations.

When the CSCC was established, in 2011, it had the support of senior government officials within President Obama's administration. At the time, Secretary of State Hillary Clinton said, “it was vital to diminish the appeal of terrorism, and the CSCC was focused on undermining terrorist propaganda and dissuading potential recruits.”⁸⁷ However, despite support from senior administration officials, the CSCC was never provided the necessary resources or authority to accomplish the goal of coordinating and integrating

⁸⁴ Exec. Order No. 13584, “Developing an Integrated Strategic Counterterrorism Communications Initiative,” 2011, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2011/09/09/executive-order-13584-developing-integrated-strategic-counterterrorism-c>.

⁸⁵ U.S. Department of State, “Global Engagement Center,” April 27, 2016, <http://www.state.gov/r/gec/>.

⁸⁶ Mr. Lumpkin, former Assistant Secretary of Defense for Special Operations and Low Intensity Conflict, was appointed as Special Envoy and Coordinator of the Global Engagement Center in March 2016.

⁸⁷ Simon Cottee, “Why It's So Hard to Stop ISIS Propaganda,” *Atlantic*, March 2, 2015, <http://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2015/03/why-its-so-hard-to-stop-isis-propaganda/386216/>.

across the U.S. Government's efforts in the communications arena. An article from *The Washington Post* cites a miniscule budget, bureaucratic politics, and the need for all products to be officially attributed to the U.S. as impediments to achieving success.⁸⁸ Here again, with the lack of resourcing, we see the difference between statements made by senior officials about the importance of influence operations and what is (or is not) done to turn their words into reality.

In his comments during a hearing on the Department of State's efforts to combat ISIS propaganda online, Chairman of the House Foreign Affairs Committee, the Honorable Edward Royce, acknowledges that little has changed with the rebranding of the CSCC as the GEC. "The United States is losing the information war to terrorists like ISIS and Hezbollah. Earlier this year, the administration rebranded the office responsible for counter messaging, but little seems to have changed."⁸⁹

C. DEMAND SIGNAL FOR DOMINANCE IN THE INFORMATION ENVIRONMENT

It is apparent that while the Departments of Defense and State have a stake in operating within the information environment, both struggle to secure the confidence of senior officials to win the information war. Hillary Clinton in 2011 appeared before a U.S. Senate Appropriations Committee and said, "[The U.S. is] in an information war ... [and we need to] try to figure out how we're going to win the information war."⁹⁰ Four years later Representative Royce voiced concerns during a committee hearing about the need to reform the Voice of America to combat Russia's information campaigns. In 2014 the House passed HR4490, a bill to enhance the missions, objectives, and effectiveness of

⁸⁸ Scott Miller and Scott Higham, "In a Propaganda War against ISIS, the U.S. Tried to Play by the Enemy's Rules," *Washington Post*, May 8, 2015, https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/national-security/in-a-propaganda-war-us-tried-to-play-by-the-enemys-rules/2015/05/08/6eb6b732-e52f-11e4-81ea-0649268f729e_story.html.

⁸⁹ Edward R. Royce, "Countering the Virtual Caliphate: The State Department's Performance," statement at a hearing before the Committee on Foreign Affairs, House of Representatives, 114th Congress, 2016.

⁹⁰ Hillary Clinton, "State, Foreign Operations, and Related Programs Appropriations for Fiscal Year 2012," statement in a hearing before the Subcommittee on Appropriations, Senate, 2011.

the U.S. international communications,⁹¹ but the Senate never approved the bill. As Chairman Royce said:

Right now, groups like ISIS, Putin, and Iran are “weaponizing” information to undermine regional stability and stoke violence. We’re on the defensive and failing to cut through the misinformation with facts. By clarifying the BBG’s mission, creating accountable leadership, and reducing the bureaucracy, more of the agency’s budget can be spent countering foreign propaganda—and not on Washington bureaucrats. ... We don’t have the luxury of minor tweaks; this legislation responds to the need for complete overhaul.⁹²

As Ranking Member Engel has put it:

During the Cold War, the Voice of America, Radio Free Europe, and other U.S.-backed broadcasters were the global gold standard for transmitting honest, unbiased news around the world. Today, the need for that information is just as great. Authoritarian governments and extremist groups are flooding airwaves and covering websites with propaganda and misinformation. Modern technologies have provided new avenues for disseminating lies and distortions to massive audiences. Unfortunately, America’s ability to respond effectively hasn’t kept pace. It’s time to breathe new life into American international broadcasting by modernizing and streamlining the BBG. I’m proud to cosponsor this legislation with Chairman Royce and I’m eager to push forward with these needed reforms.⁹³

However, what not even HR 4490 includes is how the current messaging capabilities within the Department of State and Defense will be synchronized to ensure that a consistent tone is emanated to achieve the desired effects. This lack of coordination at the departmental level makes it especially difficult for organizations, such as the Army or SOF commands to delineate the role of Army PSYOP.

⁹¹ United States International Communications Reform Act of 2014, H.R. 4490, (2014).

⁹² Royce, “Markup of United States International Communications Reform Act of 2014,” statement at a hearing before the Committee on Foreign Affairs, House of Representatives, 113th Congress, 2014.

⁹³ Eliot L. Engel, “Markup of United States International Communications Reform Act of 2014,” statement at a hearing before the Committee on Foreign Affairs, House of Representatives, 113th Congress, 2014.

D. CONCLUSION

To influence foreign target audiences requires more than just agencies across the government being able to conduct influence operations in support of their operational and tactical needs. Consequently, even if reorganization and reassignment of DOD influence forces were to occur, that would not suffice. Continuous coordination across the interagency would be required to prevent information fratricide. This challenge again points to the need for a whole-of-government approach when it comes to dominating the information environment. Ideally, such an approach would allow for Army PSYOP to pursue specified objectives and effects in concert with other agencies. In addition, confusion that exists in defining roles and responsibilities also needs to be cleared up.

According to Carnes Lord, American public diplomacy today is “lamentable” due to poor funding, organizational ineffectiveness, and an overall lack of guidance.⁹⁴ Restricting the U.S.’s ability to strategically influence or message foreign target audiences to just the tactical level is unacceptable. Both the Departments of State and Defense have buried their influence organizations and artificially separated their ability to effectively support influence operations at strategic and operational levels. Lord suggests reinstating the USIA as a means of redress to support “US foreign policy, not simply American diplomacy; it should work cooperatively with every agency of the U.S. government that has significant overseas presence or interests.”⁹⁵ Ultimately, Lord argues for an organization that is not rendered inept through bureaucracy, so that it can effectively support the development, synchronization, and dissemination of a coherent government-wide narrative to support strategic influence operations. Such an organization would serve to bridge the gap between department-level messaging guidance and the PSYOP entities responsible for planning and executing operations. It would also coordinate the efforts of various agencies and ensure consistency across regions and over time, something that standard military procedures make difficult.

⁹⁴ Carnes Lord, “Reorganizing for Public Diplomacy,” in *Information Strategy and Warfare: A Guide to Theory and Practice*, ed. John Arquilla and Douglas A Borer (New York: Routledge, 2007), 113.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 123.

IV. CURRENT STATE OF PSYCHOLOGICAL OPERATIONS

A. MISMATCH OF STRATEGY AND POLICY EXECUTION

Dr. Anthony H. Cordesman, Chairman of the Center for Strategic & International Studies, points to how the lack of a clear strategy in dealing with Operation Inherent Resolve, the fight against ISIS, is detrimental to focusing efforts on degrading organizations like ISIS.⁹⁶ Dr. Cordesman calls for an overarching strategy supported through strategic communication initiatives. He posits that ISIS would flounder if the U.S. targeted the fact that the Islamic state is not based on the religious values which it proclaims.⁹⁷ Echoing ideas voiced by Colonel Van de Velde and others, Dr. Cordesman recommends developing a clear and coherent strategy and identifying a single entity to control the informational component of national power.^{98 99}

As Philip Seib writes, “Information warfare requires an infrastructure of broadcasting, social media, and other communication assets that can direct messages”¹⁰⁰ He also argues that the credibility of the message tends to be more effective when the message is disseminated through the host nation media.¹⁰¹ Currently, efforts to compete against countries like Russia and China, as well as non-state terrorist organizations operating in the information environment, remain a struggle, as does the development of an effective information strategy. In his conclusion to *Information Strategy and Warfare: A Guide to Theory and Practice*, Douglas Borer notes that there is a pressing need for the United States Government to reverse its previous “information disarmament,” if the U.S. is to defeat our opponents’ operational and informational advantage.¹⁰² The consistent

⁹⁶ Anthony H. Cordesman, “The Islamic State War: Strategic Communications Require a Strategy,” in Gorka and the ThreatKnowledgeGroup, *The Islamic State and Information Warfare*, 52.

⁹⁷ Ibid.

⁹⁸ Ibid.

⁹⁹ R. W. Van de Velde, “Instruments of Statecraft,” *ST 33-151* 14, no. 5(1962), IIA1-IIA6.

¹⁰⁰ Philip Seib, “Fighting the Information War,” *WorldPost*, September 27, 2015.

¹⁰¹ Ibid.

¹⁰² Ibid., 237.

message is that a U.S. government agency needs to take the lead in managing the information realm a la USIA.

Dr. Waller pushes these arguments a step further. He wants individuals within the PSYOP community, to be the “thought-leaders” in developing a strategy against the global jihadist movement.¹⁰³ In his view, PSYOP is a critical component of Information Operations, but has remained as an “after-thought, rather than part of the strategic core” in the fight against terrorism for way too long.¹⁰⁴ He agrees with Colonel Van de Velde that the lack of leadership or an office responsible for coordinating information strategy is detrimental.¹⁰⁵ He also highlights how DOD fails to define “psychological strategy,” and therefore renders the PSYOP capability effective only at the “tactical-operational level.”¹⁰⁶

In short, there is growing sentiment in the academic community in favor of removing the information warfare training wheels and reorganizing efforts to be more cost effective, less time consuming, and more strategically oriented than those found in the current protracted war efforts. Arguably, such efforts point to PSYOP being the DOD entity that should have primacy on behalf of these efforts in the field.

B. SENTIMENTS ABOUT INFLUENCE OPERATIONS: IMPACTS TO PSYOP

Influence operations throughout history have played a prominent role in military operations, but the military continually defaults to conducting kinetic operations. As demonstrated in Chapter II, the historical prominence given to influence operations has fluctuated. In recent years, we have witnessed an increase in demand for influence operations when countering the actions of non-state actors like ISIS, Al-Qaeda, the Taliban, and other non-traditional adversaries who compete in the information environment (IE). During a 2007 speech, Secretary of Defense Robert Gates quoted

¹⁰³ Michael J. Waller, “Designing an Information Warfare Campaign against the Global Jihadi Movement,” in Gorka and the ThreatKnowledgeGroup, *The Islamic State and Information Warfare*, 52.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid.; Van de Velde, “Instruments of Statecraft.”

Richard Holbrooke, a former State Department official, as asking: “how [can] the leading country in communications get out communicated by a man in a cave?”¹⁰⁷ As Gates went on to remark, he did not associate speed and agility with U.S. strategic communication efforts; in saying this he was voicing his considerable frustrations.¹⁰⁸

One explanation for the continual ebb and flow of importance given to influence operations throughout recent U.S. history is that some in a democracy feel there is a certain underhandedness or unethical behavior associated with using influence operations, specifically psychological operations, and they do not feel the U.S. should be party to such activities. One consequence is that this attitude limits our government’s willingness to utilize PSYOP, a critical component of influence operations.¹⁰⁹ Others suggest that simply through the use of the term *War on Terror* we have limited our ability to develop alternative solutions.¹¹⁰ Regardless, military leaders over the past 15 years have preferred using conventional and direct action methods, eschewing a more non-kinetic approach.

What might this all mean for PSYOP? The Department of Defense has struggled with dominating the IE, yet has been directed to develop a strategy for operating in the IE. With a whole-of-government approach, psychological operations could play a significant role by helping to integrate DOD operations across the IE.

C. PSYOP AS A BRANCH: BURDENED WITH CHANGE

The U.S. Army Psychological Operations Branch was established in 2006 both in response to Al-Qaeda’s influential information campaign to erode the U.S. government’s “just war” footing and to augment the U.S. government’s efforts in two theaters of

¹⁰⁷ Robert M. Gates, “Landon Lecture,” lecture, Kansas State University, Manhattan, KS, November 26, 2007, <http://archive.defense.gov/Speeches/Speech.aspx?SpeechID=1199>; William Fisher, “Diplomatic Traffic,” *Political, Diplomatic Traffic*, accessed October 22, 2016, http://www.diplomatictraffic.com/debate_archives.asp?ID=318.

¹⁰⁸ Gates, “Landon Lecture.”

¹⁰⁹ Anthony Pratkanis, “Winning Hearts and Minds: A Social Influence Analysis,” in Arquilla and Borer, *Information Strategy and Warfare*, 56–85.

¹¹⁰ Frank Barette and Theodore Sarbin, “The Rhetoric of Terror: ‘War’ as Misplaced Metaphor,” *Information Strategy and Warfare*, ed. Arquilla and Borer, 16–33.

operation.¹¹¹ PSYOP was an existing capability with a lineage reaching back to WWII, but, prior to 2006, was considered a functional area rather than a career branch. PSYOP was developed, and is still expected today, to synchronize messaging efforts across the range of military operations and at every level of warfare from tactical to strategic.

To better understand why PSYOP soldiers should be entrusted with the task of synchronizing messaging efforts for tactical operations, as well as regionally for DOD, it is important to understand the selection, training, and education that goes into making the profession's practitioners. PSYOP soldiers must meet a series of rigorous requirements to join the Psychological Operations Regiment. All PSYOP soldiers and officers complete a specially designed assessment and selection program to ensure that they possess the requisite character traits, and are: intelligent, physically fit, and able to perform under physical and mental pressure.¹¹² Once selected, PSYOP soldiers attend an extensive 36-week qualification course that familiarizes them with media production, message dissemination management, regionally focused language and culture training, and the psychological effects of military activities.¹¹³ Some are further selected to attend advanced programs at the Naval Postgraduate School, National Defense University, Naval War College, etc., or they conduct training with industry.

In addition to developing a training pipeline to select and train uniquely qualified individuals, the new PSYOP branch has also dealt with struggles like the splitting of the active and reserve forces into separate elements.¹¹⁴ As highlighted by Brigadier General Van Roosen, both Civil Affairs (CA) and Psychological Operations regiments were

¹¹¹ "Insignia and Plaques: Psychological Operations," Institute of Heraldry, accessed October 16, 2016, <http://www.tioh.hqda.pentagon.mil/Catalog/Heraldry.aspx?HeraldryId=15357&CategoryId=9362&grp=2&menu=Uniformed%20Services&ps=24&p=0>.

¹¹² "Psychological Operations (PSYOPS) Officer (37A)," *Goarmy.com*, accessed November 17, 2016, <http://www.goarmy.com/careers-and-jobs/browse-career-and-job-categories/intelligence-and-combat-support/psychological-operations-officer.html>.

¹¹³ Dave Chace, "Psychological Operations Qualification Course Sends Soldiers into Active-Duty Force," *Www.army.mil*, accessed November 20, 2016, http://www.army.mil/article/75906/Psychological_Operations_Qualification_Course_sends_Soldiers_into_active_duty_force.

¹¹⁴ Hugh Van Roosen, "Implications of the 2006 Reassignment of U.S. Army Civil Affairs," U.S. Army War College, March 30, 2009, 24.

impacted by what some refer to as the “Great Divorce” of active duty and reserve PSYOP and CA personnel. Because the reserve components of the two regiments were viewed as an administrative burden on the U.S. Army Special Operations Command (USASOC) staff, they were shunted away to form the U.S. Army Civil Affairs and Psychological Operations Command (USACAPOC), a two-star headquarters under the U.S. Army Reserve Command. USACAPOC provides over 80 percent of the Civil Affairs and Psychological Operations forces to support Army and Joint operations. Beyond this split between active and reserve forces which generates command challenges, the training and selection for reserve CA and PSYOP soldiers also differs and leads to a capability gap.¹¹⁵

Shortly after the establishment of the new branch, the U.S. government announced the need for the surge in Iraq. As the importance of influence operations grew, the branch maintained a semblance of homeostasis and a sense of autonomy. However, in 2010, due to what U.S. Special Operations Command (USSOCOM) spokesman Ken McGraw described as “foreign and domestic sensitivities to the term ‘psychological’” operations, the branch endured another course correction with a name change for its core mission.¹¹⁶ The Army changed the name of the branch’s operations from Psychological Operations to Military Information Support Operations (MISO). While the career branch title remained PSYOP, the activities of the branch and its organizations were referred to as MISO. Despite the name change, there was never a concomitant adjustment to the PSYOP regiment’s mission or to the operations conducted by its practitioners.

¹¹⁵ “U.S. Army Civil Affairs and Psychological Operations Command (Airborne).” U.S. Army Reserve. accessed November 20, 2016, <http://www.usar.army.mil/USACAPOC/>. Citing a capability gap is not to imply inferiority or superiority of one force over the other, but should highlight the discrepancy involved with forces that are not provided the same fundamental baseline training. To our (co-authors’) knowledge, reserve CA and PSYOP are the only forces within DoD that do not attend the same qualification course training as their active duty counterparts. However, many times both CA and PSYOP reservists bring civil experience and expertise to their reserve assignments that are not possessed by the active duty CA and PSYOP force.

¹¹⁶ Anne Gearan, “Army Drops ‘Psychological Operations’ as Name of Branch that Tries to Influence Enemy Forces,” Fox News, July 2, 2010, <http://www.foxnews.com/us/2010/07/02/army-drops-psychological-operations-branch-tries-influence-enemy-forces.html>.

In August 2011, the importance of PSYOP branch within USASOC was reflected by the establishment of a second Military Information Support Group to assist in the management of its seven operational battalions.¹¹⁷ Additionally, the Army provisionally established a one-star level command, the Military Information Support Operations Command (MISOC), at the same time as the 8th Military Information Support Group.¹¹⁸

However, just as the PSYOP branch began to rise in importance and gain prominence at the operational and strategic levels, through the addition of a one-star command and a second operational Group level command, PSYOP suffered yet another change. In 2014, the MISOC's two operational Groups, 4th and 8th Military Information Support Groups, were absorbed into the newly created 1st Special Forces Command (Airborne) (see Figure 3). The MISOC headquarters positions were transformed so as to support the development of a new headquarters designed to better synchronize and coordinate global special operations support; the MISOC itself ended up being short-lived.¹¹⁹

¹¹⁷ "MISO Fact Sheet," accessed October 16, 2016, www.soc.mil/MISOC/MISO%20fact%20sheet.pdf; of note, the MISOC was only formally commanded by Special Forces officers at the rank of Colonel/O-6.

¹¹⁸ "8th Military Information Support Group (Airborne) Activation Ceremony," ShadowSpear Special Operations, August 25, 2011, <http://www.shadowsppear.com/2011/08/8th-military-information-support-group-activation/>.

¹¹⁹ Thomas J. Trask, "'Draft' DOTMLPF-P Change Recommendation for 4th and 8th Military Information Support Groups (Airborne)," United States Special Operations Command, May 1, 2016.

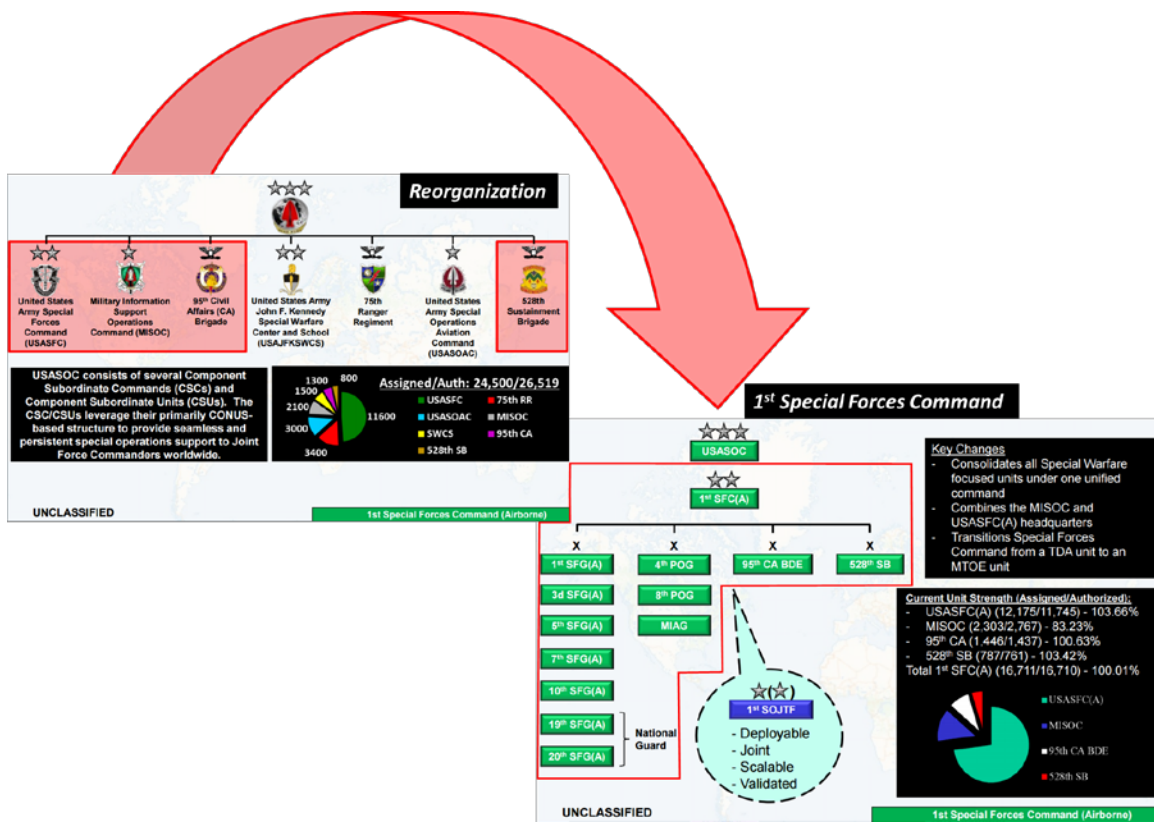


Figure 3. Army SOF Reorganization to 1st Special Forces Command¹²⁰

According to a draft document for the 2016 DOTMLPF realignment of Special Forces Command and the MISOC,

The ARSOF [Army Special Operations Forces] reorganization of MIS [military information support] force structure will increase organizational effectiveness; enhance influence capabilities across ARSOF; offer versatility across the operational spectrum; and enable USASOC to provide requirements-focused capabilities to TSOC [Theater Special Operations Command], Geographic Combatant Commands (GCC), Joint Forces, and Other Government Agencies (OGA). These capabilities include scalable tailored combinations of regionally aligned, globally responsive Special Operations Forces (SOF) to enable joint operations. When synchronized, these capabilities provide a seamless and persistent SOF capability supporting actions aimed at influencing Diplomatic, Informational, Military, Economic, Financial, Intelligence, and Law

¹²⁰ Darsie Rogers, "1st Special Forces Command (Airborne)(Provisional)," PowerPoint presentation, September 11, 2014, turcopolier.typepad.com/files/bgrogers.pdf.

Enforcement (DIME-FIL) instruments of national power and providing Senior Leaders improved insights into the human domain.¹²¹

However, through the act of combining the ARSOF regiments (Civil Affairs, Psychological Operations, and Special Forces) under the same command the representative voice that should have been allocated to each individual ARSOF regiment at the one-star level became unnecessarily limited.

D. ORGANIZATIONAL POSITIONING OF PSYOP: NOT A POSITION OF PROMINENCE

Quite often, the CA, PSYOP, and SF regiments work towards very similar goals and display Unity of Effort. Each regiment utilizes very similar approaches for achieving tactical level effects (i.e., understanding the target language and culture, working in small teams, and employing specially trained and selected individuals). However, they still need to be recognized as three separate and distinct entities. Colonel Alfred Paddock's chapter in *Political Warfare and Psychological Operations, Rethinking the U.S. Approach*, cites comments by Colonel Donald P. Hall, who feared that psychological and unconventional warfare would be hindered under a singular command because the controlling commander would give more attention to the organization from which he came and which he understood better.¹²² Essentially, Colonel Hall was warning future forces in 1952 about the dangers in violating Unity of Effort through the employment of Unity of Command (see Figure 4 and Figure 5).¹²³

¹²¹ Ibid.

¹²² Special Forces grew out of the establishment of the Special Operations Division of the Psychological Warfare Center activated at Fort Bragg, NC, in May 1952. SF began as the Army's premier proponent of unconventional warfare from the Office of Strategic Services. For more information, see the Special Operations Center of Excellence webpage, <http://www.soc.mil/SWCS/RegimentalHonors/SpecialForces.htm>.

¹²³ Unity of Command and Unity of Effort Comparison: "Unity of command means all forces operate under a single commander with the requisite authority to direct all forces employed in pursuit of a common purpose. Unity of effort, however, requires coordination and cooperation among all forces toward a commonly recognized objective, although they are not necessarily part of the same command structure. Unity of effort—coordination through cooperation and common interests—is an essential complement to unity of command." Doctrine for the Armed Forces of the United States, *Joint Publication 1* (JP1). Suffolk, VA: Directorate for Joint Force Publication (J-7), 2013.

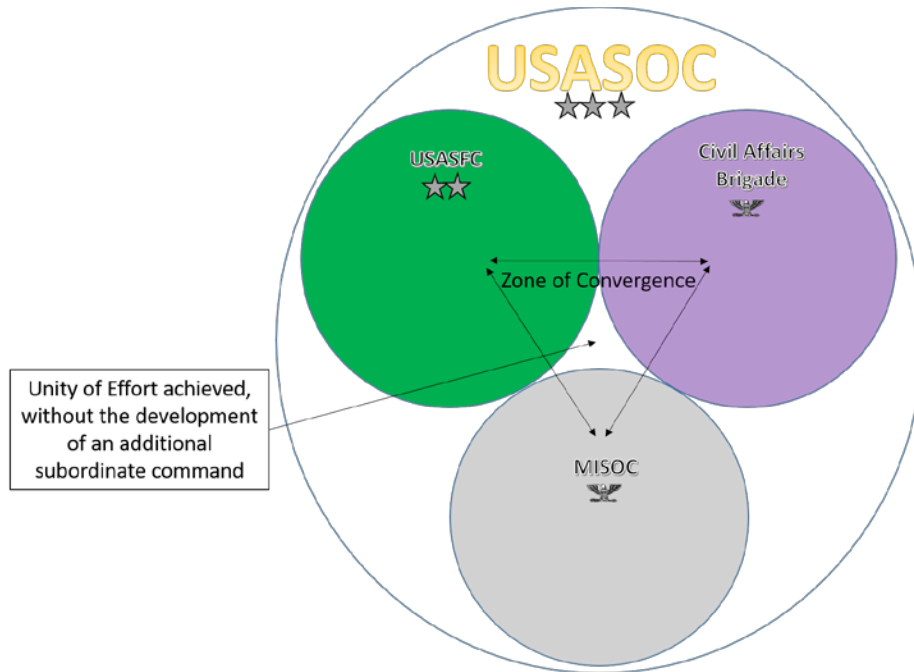


Figure 4. USASOC Organization Prior to 1st Special Forces Command

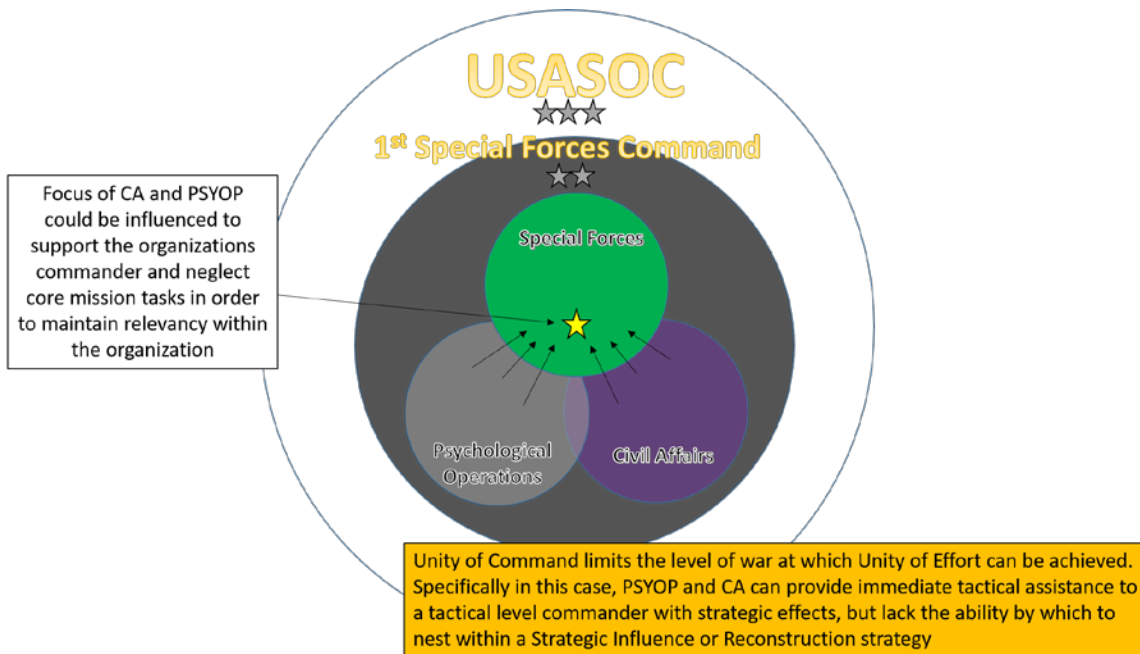


Figure 5. USASOC Organization with 1st Special Forces Command

It seems that Colonel Hall understood that each entity needs an independent *and* equal voice. Paddock further reinforces Hall’s reservations by pointing out that in “such an organizational environment, even the most conscientious PSYOP staff officer has had difficulty giving his full attention to the broader responsibilities of psychological operations rather than those oriented toward special operations.”¹²⁴ With PSYOP and Civil Affairs today integrated within 1st Special Forces Command, there is an inherent risk of their losing sight of operations that should be conducted beyond just addressing the CG’s immediate tactical needs.

All three “tribes”—CA, PSYOP, and SF—have many reasons to coordinate and cooperate. But simply combining the three organizations under “one hand” without each having an equivalent voice at the General Officer, one-star level, limits their ability to represent their capabilities themselves at higher levels, and beyond just SOF in the DOD.¹²⁵

Indeed, the idea that a single “Generalist” officer can adequately and equitably represent all three sets of regimental capabilities when his experiences came from within only one regiment leaves many PSYOP professionals skeptical. For example, having a Psychological Operations officer speak on behalf of the Special Forces regiment to Congress would doubtless invite scrutiny not only from within the SF community, but also from without. The PSYOP representative would lack the operational expertise and firsthand knowledge to be able to convey SF’s needs, and might not be able to articulate as well as a Green Beret how SF should be properly employed to members of Congress. SF operators would also have to worry that a PSYOP General might depict SF as enablers to Psychological Operations. Our intent here is not to criticize Generals who have represented PSYOP to Congress recently, but instead to simply point to a truism:

¹²⁴ Alfred H. Paddock Jr., “Military Psychological Operations,” in *Political Warfare and Psychological Operations: Rethinking the US Approach*, ed. Frank R. Barnett and Carnes Lord (Washington, DC: National Defense University Press in cooperation with National Strategy Information Center, 1989), 45–76, http://archive.org/details/bub_gb_ygpJhCSUK14C.

¹²⁵ The three regiments, Civil Affairs, Special Forces, and Psychological Operations are referred to as tribes within the U.S. Army Special Operations community.

everyone is likelier to be passionate about what they know best, and biases are not always conscious.

While serial organizational changes, changes in naming conventions, and efforts to fuse independent ARSOF organizations have limited PSYOP's role at the strategic level, the lack of a published strategy has also been a factor

E. ADMINISTRATIVE REQUIREMENTS LIMIT OPTIMAL OPERATIONAL UTILITY

Over the past 15 years, with continuous operations throughout Iraq, Afghanistan, and over 100 additional locations around the world, frequent deployments have taken a significant toll on ARSOF. Political and military leaders alike have made efforts to ease the burden on service members and their families, but this has created new problems related to continuity when deployed units rotate as frequently as they do. It is difficult to manage any kind of long-term plan when the units responsible for executing it deploy for only six to nine months at a time.

Recently, deployment cycles, other than to combat zones, have been limited to 179 days or less throughout SOCOM.¹²⁶ Limiting the amount of time in operational environment (OE), never mind the same OE, diminishes the ability to provide persistent oversight for long-term influence operations.¹²⁷ The repeated turnover of manpower, and individuals not returning to the same OE, also limits the acquisition of regional knowledge and awareness concerning the impacts of ongoing influence operations in supporting U.S. Embassy and DOD goals and objectives. An additional operational side effect results in PSYOP personnel planning and conducting influence efforts that are aimed at achieving near-term tactical impacts with minimal effects on the long-term strategic efforts. The pressure to produce results to achieve a "successful" deployment

¹²⁶ The authors acknowledge that the onus to manage the continuation of operations for the long-term falls on the Geographic Combatant Command staffs or, in the case of Special Operations Forces, it falls to the responsibility of the Theater Special Operations Command. However, we are not implying negligence on the part of the staffs, but potentially an additional impact created by short deployment cycles and the self-inflicted requirement to show progress within shortened deployment cycles.

¹²⁷ These limitations may not apply to everyone's experiences in the PSYOP regiment, but they generally reflect the experience of the co-authors as recounted during a study held at NPS in the spring of 2016.

stacks the deck in favor of measures of performance rather than measures of effectiveness, though shortened deployments are not the only inhibiting factor impacting continuity of effort.

Individuals must move through certain army/branch key developmental (KD) positions to be considered for promotion.¹²⁸ To stay competitive often requires individuals to be reassigned to positions that no longer allow them to return to the same OE. These requirements prevent officers from being able to acquire deep regional knowledge. Although there have been attempts to lengthen operational availability of SOF officers through the creation of the Special Operations Captain's Career Course, its effects still fall short of redressing all of the operational shortfalls created by excessive churn.¹²⁹ Together, shortened deployments, career pressures, and the need to move through KD positions work against PSYOP professionals being able to execute policy as effectively as they otherwise should.

F. CONCLUSION

The dissolution of the MISOC denies USASOC a command that could have played a significant role in coordinating and synchronizing interagency efforts, as well as advising the USASOC and SOCOM commanders on the effective integration of PSYOP into the whole-of-government approach. This is counter to the importance integration has been given in testimony to the HASC subcommittee. Additionally, abolition of the MISOC limits the ability for Psychological Operations to have a General Officer with the resident expertise to provide policy input at the right levels to political and military leaders. Meanwhile, to develop a system in which the influence of foreign target audiences is at the forefront of operations, and does not solely come from the tip of a gun barrel, means that regional commanders and staffs need to have that capability within reach.

¹²⁸ *Commissioned Officer Professional Development and Career Management*, Department of the Army Pamphlet 600-3 (Washington, DC: Headquarters, Department of the Army, 2014), <https://www.army.mil/e2/c/downloads/376665.pdf>.

¹²⁹ Shawn A. Stangle, "Special Operations Forces Captain's Career Course," *Special Warfare*, October 1, 2015.

V. RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSION

A. INTRODUCTION

The need to refine, reorganize, or transform the U.S. government's influence capabilities is not a novel concept. George Creel, Elmer Davis, and Edward Bernays all made recommendations over the years for organizations to replace or revitalize the CPI, OWI, or USIA. Recently, academics like Carnes Lord, Sebastian Gorka, and Hy Rothstein have written about the need to transform the U.S. government's role in the information environment.¹³⁰ However, this thesis has been geared towards the discussion of how one agency, the Department of Defense, can play a more effective role within the information environment by using PSYOP to better effect.

During a 2016 Naval Postgraduate School (NPS) directed study, the co-authors participated in discussions that led the group to develop concepts to enhance success and overcome shortcomings in how PSYOP forces are structured and operationally employed. The NPS group identified four impediments to PSYOP mission success that held true regardless of the mission setting.

The first is that the bulk of the responsibility for planning, developing, executing, and evaluating PSYOP activities lies at the lowest echelon, the team level. PSYOP teams, which by doctrine are typically led by a captain or a senior NCO, take guidance from existing operational orders, but are themselves responsible for fleshing out and achieving the desired effects or objectives of the plan. In addition, the team must develop supporting objectives, analyze potential target audiences, and devise assessment plans. These are just some of the things the team must do in what is just the first phase of a seven-step process (as indicated in Figure 6.)

¹³⁰ Lord, "Reorganizing for Public Diplomacy"; Sebastian L. Gorka and the ThreatKnowledgeGroup, eds, *The Islamic State and Information Warfare: Defeating ISIS and the Broader Global Jihadist Movement*, ThreatKnowledgeGroup, January 2015. <http://threatknowledge.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/11/TKG-Report-ISIS-Info-Warfare.pdf>; Hy S. Rothstein, "Strategy and Psychological Operations," in *Information Strategy and Warfare: A Guide to Theory and Practice*, ed. John Arquilla and Douglas A Borer (New York: Routledge, 2007), 160–86.

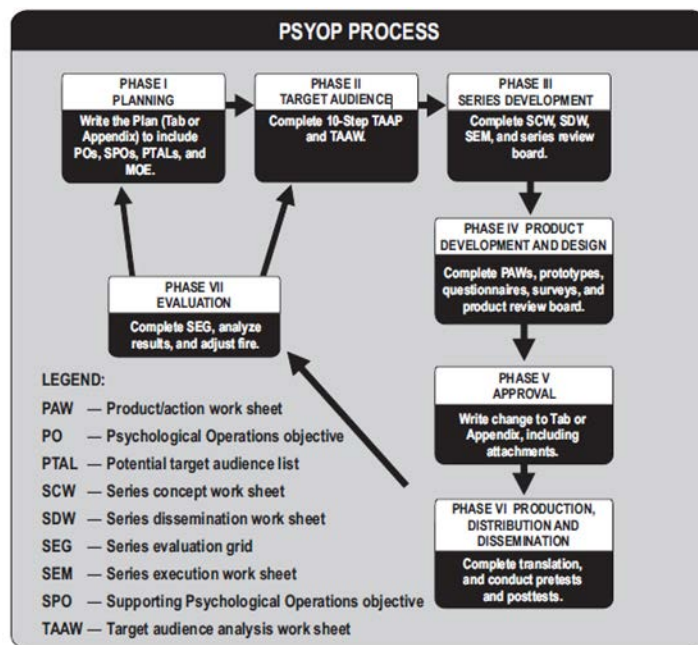


Figure 6. Seven-Phase PSYOP Process¹³¹

The next steps of the process require: in-depth analysis of the target audiences and the most effective methods to reach them; development of the discrete messaging actions that will reach the audience; and design of the products (visual, audio, and/or audio-visual) that will deliver the message. These are the parts of the process that call upon the SOF operators’ cultural, linguistic, and regional knowledge developed through training and experience. All of the work conducted by the team in the initial phases goes into a packet for review and approval by higher echelons. Following approval, which will be discussed in detail below, the team oversees the production, distribution, and dissemination of its products, then conducts assessments to evaluate the effectiveness of its efforts. Many other elements support the PSYOP process, but the team bears the brunt of responsibility for ensuring that all steps are conducted thoroughly and completely. Bottom line: currently, the team represents the fulcrum of operations for PSYOP.

The second impediment the NPS study identified is short deployment cycles. The tools and techniques PSYOP employs to induce behavior change cannot achieve those

¹³¹ United States Army Special Warfare Center and School, *Psychological Operations Leaders Planning Guide (GTA 33-01-001)* (Ft. Bragg, NC: Headquarters, Department of the Army, 2005).

changes overnight. The process described above takes time; it takes time to conduct research, analysis, and administrative actions. Yet, teams tasked with conducting these activities are limited to six-month-long deployments, which is far too little time to see a program through from beginning to end. The resulting lack of continuity is devastating. In one instance, described to the NPS group, a team in West Africa spent a considerable portion of its deployment researching and developing a five-year program for its assigned country; three years later, when another participant in the NPS study was assigned to that same area, none of the work the earlier team had begun was being continued. Nor is this an isolated example.

The detailed work necessary to plan and develop PSYOP activities suffers greatly from multiple changeovers among teams; even the best transition plan cannot transfer six months of researched understanding. The PSYOP community has tried to address this challenge by encouraging contact between outgoing and incoming teams and by emphasizing reachback capabilities which connect stateside assets with deployed teams.¹³² However, maintaining a continuity of effort across multiple teams over the course of multiple transitions and personnel changes over a period of years remains a challenge.

A third hurdle is administrative: it takes too long to implement a PSYOP program thanks to a multi-tiered message approval process. Guidance regarding the themes of PSYOP messages is taken from Geographic Combatant Command (GCC) or theater-level plans and orders, but the messages themselves are developed a few echelons lower, by the PSYOP team itself. Situations vary, but a typical approval chain consists of a PSYOP element just above the team's level that reviews the proposed message or product first, before it goes to a SOF task force or forward element, then a theater-level SOF command, and then a GCC. Because the proposal packet may have to go through staffing processes at each level, there can be needless, sometimes very detrimental, delays in approval of time-sensitive products. Here we do not mean to suggest that the PSYOP process should not fit into overall strategy or that PSYOP should not be coordinated with

¹³² *Joint Publication 1-02* defines reachback as “The process of obtaining products, services, and applications, or forces, or equipment, or material from organizations that are not forward deployed.”

other ongoing operations, but that the inclusion in the staffing process of individuals unfamiliar with psychological operations sometimes results in delays as PSYOP personnel respond to inquiries or challenges from well-intentioned, but uninformed, colleagues.¹³³

The final impediment identified by the NPS study group was the difficulty in linking PSYOP programs and series to an overarching national strategy, a challenge that is strained by organizational structures. As mentioned previously, the U.S. government struggles with maintaining a consistent narrative focus, and since the end of the Cold War and the dissolution of the USIA, lacks a good mechanism for doing so. Military commanders, and especially those in SOF, must pay attention to the human domain and develop messaging strategies for their areas of responsibility. Combatant commands and their subordinate echelons regularly cite PSYOP themes they want stressed as well as themes to avoid in their annexes to their operations orders, but these themes are developed to achieve operational and tactical effects rather than to support a national-level narrative or strategy. This can lead to disjointed, perhaps even contradictory messaging, which is damaging to U.S. credibility. When coupled with the impediments described above — PSYOP responsibilities being pushed to the lowest level, and overly short deployment cycles — this lack of a strategic narrative ensures that the United States will struggle to win an information war.

These four obstacles — the overburdening of the PSYOP teams, short-duration deployments resulting in a lack of continuity, a cumbersome approval process, and lack of an overarching strategic narrative — combine to make the already challenging task of inducing behavior change in an often resistant target audience even more difficult. In order to overcome these obstacles, we would offer several recommendations, all of which would be greatly enhanced if the U.S. Government developed an independent organization legally authorized and adequately funded to synchronize influence operations.

¹³³ The authors do not intend to convey a “you wouldn’t understand, so trust us” attitude. However, if one considers PSYOP a weapons system that can be used to achieve a desired effect, we would submit that commanders or staff officers would not let their laymen’s understanding of the workings of an artillery battery or an aircraft’s weapons system delay their approval of the use of that system to achieve an effect.

B. RECOMMENDATION ONE: MISOC REACTIVATION PROVIDES INFLUENCE OVERSIGHT IN DOD

Our first recommendation is comprised of three critical adjustments. By making use of PSYOP operational experience, it would place the Psychological Operations Regiment at a level of prominence and grant it the voice requisite to enable it to assist in shaping DOD influence policy (see Figure 7).

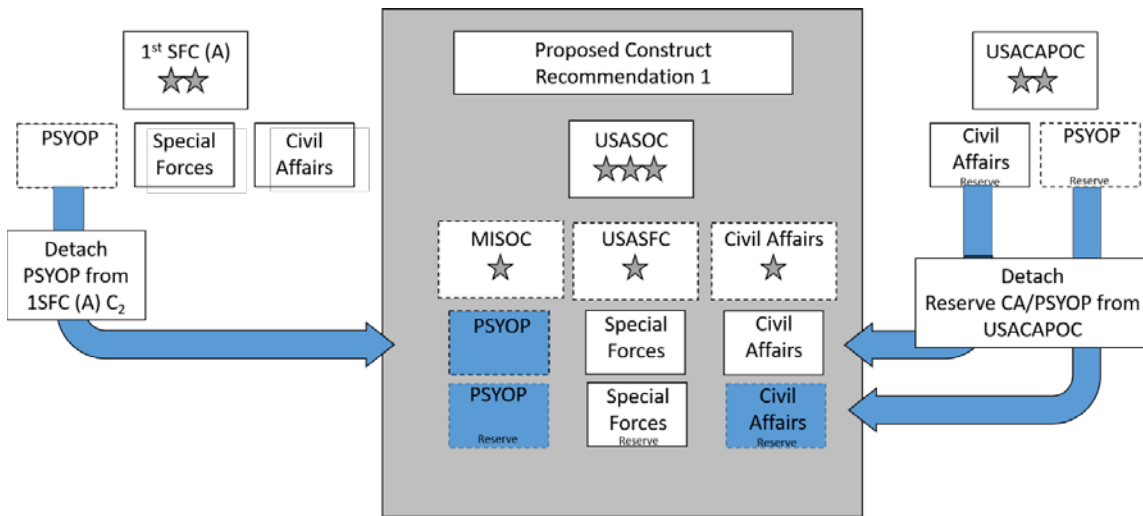


Figure 7. Recommendation One, MISOC Reactivation

Adjustment #1 would reestablish the MISOC, remove PSYOP from within 1st SFC (A), and place it back under USASOC as a one-star command. As discussed in Chapter IV, PSYOP is and should remain an independent organization commanded by a Psychological Operations officer.^{134 135} Subordinating PSYOP organizations to another branch’s command unduly restricts PSYOP’s potential. Allowing the Regiment to remain as an independent unit would grant it the voice it needs at the national level, represented by an individual who has the requisite institutional, organizational, and operational experience.

¹³⁴ Paddock, “Military Psychological Operations.”

¹³⁵ It could be argued that since MISOC’s inception in 2011 the warning from Colonel Hall from 1952 has been violated because the MISOC was only commanded by Special Forces officers.

Under this rubric, the MISOC should also be willing to accept additional responsibility for all of the army's PSYOP forces, which includes the reserve component. It is commonly recognized within the Army and the Special Operations community that reserve and active component PSYOP forces do not provide the same operational capability. This is in large part due to differences in their training pipelines. This should not be used, however, to pardon the active component from being responsible for providing oversight of PSYOP across army operations

Consequently, Adjustment #2 would make the MISOC the organizational oversight mechanism for all active and reserve component psychological operations units. The current organization construct of 1st Special Forces Command overseeing active PSYOP, and USACAPOC overseeing reserve PSYOP, places psychological operations capabilities under two different commands. The MISOC should command, synchronize, and employ both active and reserve PSYOP forces to support SOF and Conventional Force (CF) integration. Current existing operational relationships of active duty PSYOP forces working with SOF and reserve PSYOP forces working with CF could remain the same.

The final adjustment, Adjustment #3, is internal to the PSYOP regiment. It addresses many of the issues raised by the NPS study group, and recommends an alternate division of labor for the seven phase PSYOP process. As discussed earlier, the bulk of the responsibility for each step of the process except for V (approval) currently rests with the lowest echelon, the team. Our proposed change would place senior PSYOP personnel at the TSOCs as the primary stakeholders for phases I–V. These experienced personnel would be responsible for the planning of PSYOP programs and for their integration with higher-echelon plans. The teams would continue to participate in phases I–V, but their primary role would be to interact with the target audience and local partners. The team's main responsibility would be to execute phases VI and VII. This would address the issue of the least experienced PSYOP officers being the primary planners for influence operations, and would place more experienced (and vetted) individuals in positions of responsibility for developing the plans to be executed by the teams. The teams would thus be freed to focus on how to apply the regional plan to their

specific operational environment. The teams would also be spared the heavy administrative tasks associated with the development of a PSYOP program. To succeed, of course, this adjustment would require frequent, open, and bi-directional interaction between the teams on the ground and the planners at the theater-level headquarters.

Meanwhile, the realignments we have just described do not address the disparity in training received by reserve and active component PSYOP forces. Secondly, the realignments might reopen old wounds associated with the management of reserve forces by the active component and the unique administrative challenges associated with reserve units, though both drawbacks can be mitigated if not fully resolved.

The disparity in training can be eased through the integration of reservists as individual augmentees during periods of heightened operational tempo to enable reserve soldiers to work with and gain experience from the active forces. Additionally, reserve forces could be employed as surplus planning and series execution teams during their two weeks of annual training. Incorporating the reserve forces in these two simple ways would assist in homogenizing reserve and active forces' capabilities via shared experiences. Relationships would also be strengthened and important knowledge shared. Lastly, the management of the reserve forces would be undertaken by a command subordinate to USASOC rather than by separate units which has led to frustrations in the USASOC staff.¹³⁶ For example, "transferring the USAR SOF units would be a welcome method by which to reduce the requirement to support conventional forces and rid the command of the challenge of managing USAR units with their separate funding requirements and the historical problems of keeping a reserve component command combat ready."¹³⁷

A consolidated list of advantages and disadvantages for Recommendation One follows:

¹³⁶ Van Roosen Hugh, "Implications of the 2006 Reassignment of U.S. Army Civil Affairs," *U.S. Army War College*, March 30, 2009, 24.

¹³⁷ *Ibid.*

Advantages:

- Allows the PSYOP Regiment to remain as an independent capability with a representative at the General Officer level who has the requisite operational and institutional experience
- Ensures consistency of regional messaging and PSYOP efforts (active and reserve forces)
- Allows the team to focus on developing a better cultural understanding and relieved of administrative burdens
- Provides the team more of an opportunity to interact with the population
- Increases the consistency of PSYOP efforts during shortened deployment cycles when phases I–V are managed at the TSOC level
- Limits the tendency for confirmation bias when the team is not responsible for creating the PSYOP series and program (the team is only responsible for phases VI and VII)
- Creates continuity of effort among all PSYOP teams deployed throughout a region

Disadvantages:

- Potential for the plan developed by TSOC planners during phases I–V to not fit the operational environment
- Potential for the PSYOP team to seem disconnected from understanding the population when not primarily responsible for phases I–V
- Potential for TSOC PSYOP planners to not allow the team autonomy to execute the TSOC plan in the most operationally effective way
- Potential for TSOC PSYOP planners to ignore the operator on the ground because the planners feel they already have the “right” answer

Meanwhile, how best to operationalize these changes would be a suitable topic for further study.

C. RECOMMENDATION TWO: RETURN TO INTELLIGENCE ROOTS AND EMULATE THE FAO CONSTRUCT

Our second recommendation is more revolutionary. Many of the criticisms made of the PSYOP community both internally and externally have to do with: lack of continuity between teams; failure to routinely deploy organic teams on more than one rotation together; inability to conduct long-term influence operations; effectiveness only at the tactical-operational level, but not at the strategic level; lack of ability by PSYOP to provide measures of effectiveness (MOE).^{138 139} As PSYOP stakeholders, we would say these are legitimate challenges faced by PSYOP professionals on a regular basis. Here is where the call to return PSYOP to its intelligence roots offers several opportunities that would allow PSYOP to be more effective in executing influence operations. For this we borrow from the FAO construct (Figure 8).

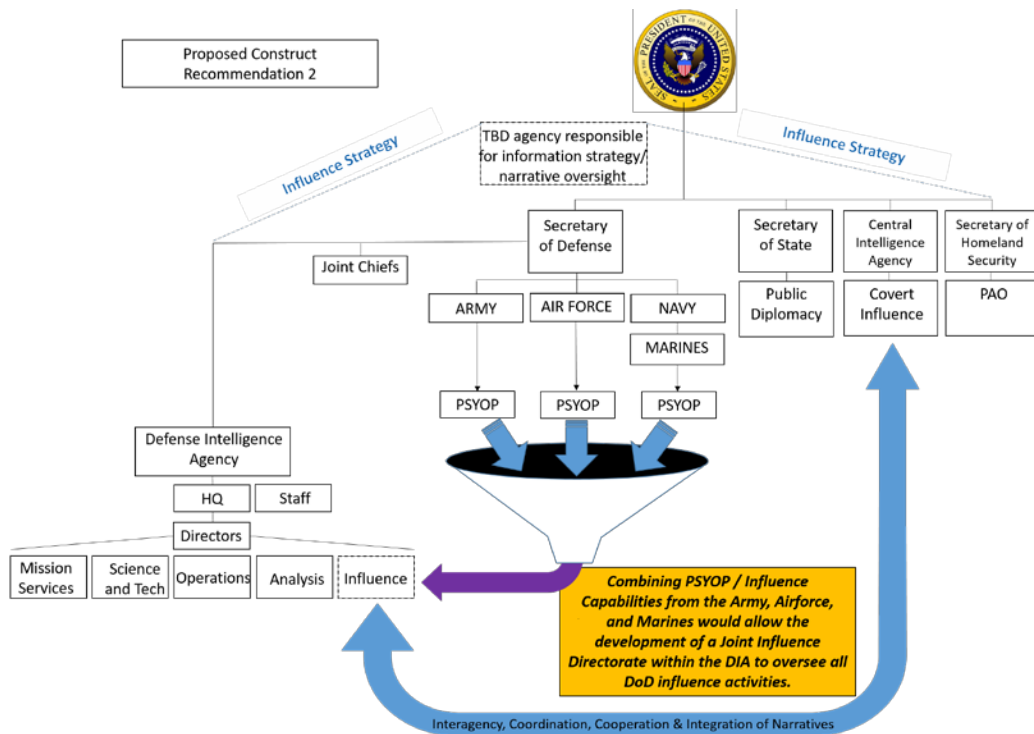


Figure 8. Recommendation Two, FAO Construct

¹³⁸ Waller, "Designing an Information Warfare Campaign," 52.

¹³⁹ Rothstein, "Strategy and Psychological Operations."

Recommendation Two consists of removing the PSYOP branch, both active and reserve forces, completely from USSOCOM and placing it as a subordinate directorate within the Defense Intelligence Agency. Reassigning PSYOP to the intelligence community would allow PSYOP to address a significant weakness: assessing PSYOP effectiveness or MOE. As Rothstein and others argue, the effects from PSYOP activities will never be as obvious as those from kinetic operations, so assessing their impact is more difficult than is assessing typical battle damage.¹⁴⁰ Re-integrating PSYOP back into the intelligence community, its original World War I and II-era home, would benefit both communities. Closer integration with intelligence analysts would enable the development of more refined and targeted psychological operations, while the close contact of PSYOP personnel with their target audiences and local populations would generate information to be assessed for intelligence purposes. By providing atmospherics about populations around the world, PSYOP could help corroborate or refute information and assessments from other intelligence sources.

PSYOP's placement as a subordinate directorate in the DIA would mean PSYOP would need to follow something like the Foreign Area Officer (FAO) model, whereby PSYOP personnel could hold permanent positions in U.S. embassies around the world. This would allow PSYOP the ability to develop a more methodical approach to influence operations versus fulfilling immediate gratification taskers designed to demonstrate progress during overly short deployments. Under this recommendation, PSYOP officers and noncommissioned Officers (NCOs) would move to select U.S. embassies through a permanent change of station (PCS). The embassies would be those deemed integral by the national influence strategy.

Deploying PSYOP forces in this FAO-like fashion would provide several advantages. As permanent parties in U.S. embassies throughout the world, PSYOP personnel can better integrate with U.S. public diplomacy efforts. Better long-term influence effects would come from a single team maintaining a persistent presence rather than efforts being interrupted by frequent team and personnel rotations. U.S.

¹⁴⁰ Arquilla and Borer, *Information Strategy and Warfare*.

Ambassadors would also find themselves with more mature and knowledgeable PSYOP practitioners, because in the new system PSYOP professionals would first work under more experienced leaders who would help them understand the country team and how to better integrate with it. Ideally, PSYOP professionals would no longer be responsible for strategic influence on their first rotation, but instead, by working under more experienced PSYOP professionals, would gain valuable insights into the real world application of influence activities, develop a better understanding of regional and cultural nuances, and develop a better understanding of how to focus influence operations regionally. Taken together, this should also mean that U.S. ambassadors should have less to worry about in accepting a PSYOP team.

A consolidated list of advantages and disadvantages for Recommendation Two follows:

Advantages:

- Establishes a persistent presence and partnership with the U.S. Embassy and Department of State to support Public Diplomacy efforts
- Develops a truly regionally and culturally adept PSYOP operator
- Minimizes the 179 day turnovers between teams
- Allows for the establishment of long-term professional relationships with DOS officials, interagency partners, host nation partners, NGOs, and others that maintain a persistent presence within the operational environment
- Increases the ability to collect relevant measures of effectiveness. Enables seeing a PSYOP series through from start to finish over the course of years, which will assist in the observation of the behavioral changes in the target audience
- Would generate valuable information for the intelligence community regarding population sentiments
- Could reduce the amount of manpower and sustainment resources needed when stationed forward as a part of the U.S. Embassy country team (i.e., no longer need to meet low density MOS requirements at Ft. Bragg to support the battalion and group administrative and logistics operations)

- Provides for better opportunities with OGAs that have established working relationships with the DoD intelligence community
- Provides a better opportunity for PSYOP forces to develop junior officers through on-the-job-training by placing them as assistants within an embassy planning team for two to three years prior to becoming a primary embassy planners

Disadvantages:

- Means support to SOF and conventional forces will have to come from reserve PSYOP forces
- Might result in loss of standing as a branch in conventional forces' eyes

Again, how best to operationalize these changes would be a suitable topic for further study.

D. GREATER FISCAL RESPONSIBILITY: REDUCTION IN FORCE AND BUDGETS CALL FOR CREATIVITY

Beyond the operational benefits, there would be fiscal advantages to implementing this recommendation. PSYOP would no longer need the large logistical support structure currently in place at Ft. Bragg, North Carolina (i.e., mechanics, signal, administrative support personnel). The only low-density logistical support needed would be for the reserve forces to support both SOF and conventional force combat deployments and training exercises. In addition, by maintaining a permanent team presence within U.S. embassies, PSYOP soldiers would no longer require such a substantial TDY budget. A PSYOP professional's salary would instead be supplemented by a Cost of Living Allowance (COLA), which is typically less than TDY per diem. Finally, transportation costs for deploying and redeploying soldiers every six months would be reduced. Of course, a more rigorous cost-benefit analysis would need to be conducted, but from our perspective it seems that Recommendation Two offers fiscal and not just operational and strategic advantages.

Meanwhile, under this new rubric, the active and reserve components of PSYOP would be controlled by the Influence Directorate within DIA.¹⁴¹ This would not be totally cost-free. For instance, the removal of the active component from the 1st SFC (A) and USSOCOM overall could lead to SOF forces feeling that they are not being adequately supported, and therefore they might attempt to execute influence operations on their own.¹⁴² Also, political and military officials would need to be able to effectively overcome their inherent aversion to PSYOP. Otherwise, the idea of a permanent PSYOP presence will meet with rejection.

E. CONCLUSION

Two persistent problems plague PSYOP. The current method of employing PSYOP is not harnessing the full potential of PSYOP professionals. Second, PSYOP needs to be positioned and provided a place of prominence in order to maximize its practitioners' capabilities. So long as the status quo remains unaltered, the Department of Defense's influence efforts will achieve only tactical and operational level effects at best. Without seriously re-considering the role that PSYOP should play within the operational and strategic realm, and without more closely integrating influence undertaken by the Department of Defense with intelligence community efforts, the U.S. government risks remaining reactionary in the information environment.

¹⁴¹ In this situation, reserve forces could be utilized to augment vacancies within the active force at U.S. embassies. If needed, active component PSYOP soldiers could be utilized to fill key planning billets to support conventional/SOF efforts if requested or if the billet could not be filled by reserve PSYOP forces due to a shortened operational availability.

¹⁴² Matthew R. Wood, "Special Warfare: Restructuring for the Future" (master's thesis, Naval Postgraduate School, 2016).

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