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Information Operations and Unity of Effort
The case for a Joint Interagency Information Operations Task Force

by

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The contents of this paper reflect my own personnel views and are not necessarily endorsed by the Naval War College or the Department of the Navy.

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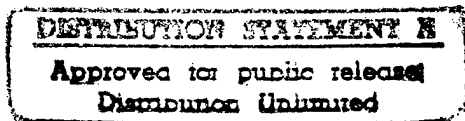
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Abstract of

INFORMATION OPERATIONS AND UNITY OF EFFORT. THE CASE FOR A JOINT INTERAGENCY INFORMATION OPERATIONS TASK FORCE

With the end of the Cold War and the resulting down-sizing of the military, unity of effort between all instruments of U.S. national power is more important than ever. However, it is likely that most of the military operations will be Military Operations Other Than War (MOOTW) which will require coordination of the national instruments of power at the operational level. Currently, the organizational structure does not exist to effectively and efficiently coordinate the instruments of power below the national-strategic or theater-strategic level of operations.

In addition, information has been recognized, along with economics, diplomacy, and the military as a national instrument of power. The informational instrument is unique in that it has components in the other three instruments of power. By the coordinated application of the information instrument of power at the operational level, a significant increase in unity of effort could be achieved.

By establishing a Joint Interagency Information Operations Task Force (JIIOTF) at the operational level, in support of military operations, including MOOTW, unity of effort and a coordinated application of the information instrument of power can be achieved. The result of coordinated InfoOps would be reduced combat casualties, faster establishment of legitimacy for humanitarian operations, increased host nation support for relief missions, and more effective application of the other instruments of power. It is possible, through the effective use of InfoOps, that conflicts can be resolved without use of force. The JIIOTF provides the organizational structure needed to employ InfoOps at the operational level.

The end of the bipolar Cold War has meant a significant reduction in the threat of a nuclear holocaust, but brought with it a litany of other threats. Among these threats are: the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, terrorism, international organized crime and drug trafficking.[1] America's National Security Strategy calls on the U.S. to exert active leadership and engagement abroad to deter aggression, foster peaceful resolution of conflicts and promote democracy.[2]

At the same time as the security environment is undergoing significant change, the U.S. is experiencing substantial down-sizing. With a smaller military, protecting and promoting America's interests will require an increased unity of effort between all elements of our national power.

The current U.S. National Military Strategy recognizes the requirements to use military capabilities in concert with the other elements of national power, in order to protect U.S. national interests.[3] However, there is no organizational process that enables the effective and efficient application of the national instruments of power in support of military operations below the national-strategic or theater-strategic level of warfare or in military operations other than war (MOOTW).

In an effort to increase unity of effort and to effectively apply the national instruments of power at the operational level of warfare, this paper proposes the use of an Joint Interagency Information Operations Task Force or JIIOTF. The JIIOTF provides the organizational structure and process necessary to fully exploit and protect our informational instrument of power and by doing so, significantly increases unity of effort in support of military operations.

Information As An Instrument Of Power

Current U.S. Joint Warfare Doctrine recognizes four instruments of national power: economic, diplomatic, informational, and military.[4] The addition of information as an instrument of power has resulted form the rapid advances in information technology and the corresponding worldwide influence of information systems and products. In addition, the declining acceptance of war as a means of conflict resolution has resulted in a quest for new methods of crisis and conflict control.

The informational instrument of national power is unique in that it has major components in the other three instruments of power. In other words, the informational instrument of power is made up of diplomatic, economic and military informational components.[5] Unlike the other instruments that have one lead organization responsible for its employment, the informational power is spread across the military organizations, the Department of State and the Department of Commerce. In addition, numerous other U.S. government (USG), commercial, and private organizations have various pieces of the informational instrument of power. Therefore, unity of effort is required to fully employ this one instrument of national power.[6]

The use and manipulation of information to achieve national objectives is not a new idea. Almost every successful military commander since Sun Tzu has skillfully exploited the military component of informational power for deception, surprise and psychological advantage. Military information operations have been applied both as an integrating strategy and as a force multiplier across all levels of warfare, including the

tactical, operational, and strategic levels of warfare. This is not necessarily true of the diplomatic and economic components of the informational instrument of power.

In the past, the diplomatic and economic instruments of power have been applied primarily at the national or strategic level. This has worked well in large wars where there is a nationally coordinated wartime strategy. World War II was the high-water mark for unity of effort in the strategic application of the national instruments of power. However, in the current world of multiple peacekeeping, humanitarian, and long term presence missions, a more operationally oriented system must be developed to increase unity of effort at the operational level.

Since significant portions of the economic and diplomatic instruments of power are contained in their informational components, unity of effort can be achieved or certainly improved through the coordinated application of all components of the informational instrument of power. Whether in support of a major theater war or MOOTW, coordinated information operations can serve as a force multiplier or mission enabler and have the potential to resolve conflicts without the use of force.

Currently however, there is not an organizational structure that fully enables the integrated and deconflicted application of the informational instrument of power at the military operational level. To achieve informational, or any other unity of effort, requires coordination among the departments and agencies across all branches of government, nongovernmental organizations, and among nations in any alliance or coalition.[7] The type of coordination necessary to conduct effective, unified, information operations is not possible in the current organizational structure of military operations.

Before addressing organizational concerns any further it is necessary to define information operations. This paper proposes the following definition of information operations, or InfoOps: *actions that use information as the primary means to influence an adversary, or target audience, to make decisions or take actions, favorable to, or preferred by, the organization conducting the operations and includes the protection of friendly forces and elements from such actions.*[8] Examples of InfoOps include propaganda efforts, adversary computer system attacks, PSYOP, public affairs, deception, and information sharing. On the defensive side, InfoOps include counter-propaganda, information security, and response to adverse media.

InfoOps is not another name for Information Warfare (IW). IW is an amalgam of war fighting capabilities and focuses on a target set.[9] A major difference is that IW, unlike InfoOps, doesn't necessarily use information to accomplish its mission. Rather, IW targets information resources and processes, using not only information, but also other soft kill and hard kill techniques. IW and Command and Control Warfare (C2W) do contain elements of InfoOps such as deception and operational security, but IW/C2W are not totally inclusive within InfoOps.

Goals for InfoOps range from establishing legitimacy for humanitarian operations[10] and increasing host-nation support for alliances, to reducing the will of adversaries to fight and protecting our information reach-back capabilities when deployed. A legitimate goal is that through the timely and coordinated use of InfoOps conflicts can be averted prior to military hostilities commencing. InfoOps are

applicable to all types of military operations, and across the spectrum from peacetime, to pre-hostilities, to war, to post-hostilities, and back to peace again.[11]

Current Information Operations Organization

In order to develop an organizational structure to effectively conduct InfoOps, we must first identify the existing organizational structure that executes either offensive or defensive InfoOps. On the military side alone there are numerous organizations that have a major piece of InfoOps.

First, on the offensive side is the Information Warfare (IW) Cell under the J-3 or Operations Officer. The IW cell is responsible for the planning, coordination, and deconfliction of several military elements of InfoOps, including C2W. C2W consists of five elements: operational security, deception, electronic warfare, PSYOP, and destruction.[12] As stated earlier, IW and C2W are not totally inclusive within InfoOps. Certainly the destruction element and portions of the electronic warfare element do not fall under InfoOps. However, there is a considerable portion of military InfoOps planned or coordinated by the IW Cell.

The J-6 (C4 Systems) is the primary agent for IW protect which includes information security, communication security and computer security. The J-6 is also concerned with the protection of his communication connectivity back to the United States when deployed. Currently, over 95 per cent of Department of Defense (DOD) communications go over commercial communication systems, much of it unclassified and not under the control or jurisdiction of the Department of Defense.[13] Protection of these reach-back capabilities is a part of InfoOps.

Another military piece of InfoOps is the Joint Psychological Operations Task Force (JPOTF). Although they work in concert with the IW Cell, the commander of the JPOTF reports directly to the Commander of the Joint Task Force (CJTF). The JPOTF is tasked with conducting PSYOP planning and execution.

A fourth major military element of military InfoOps is the public affairs officer (PAO). Usually deployed as part of the Joint Task Force (JTF) command group, the PAO must ensure deconfliction between his InfoOps and those of both the JPOTF and the Joint Civil Military Operations Task Force (JCMOTF).

The JCMOTF responsibilities include advising the CJTF on policy, multinational or host nation sensitivities and their effect on theater strategy or operational missions. Included in the JCMOTF's responsibilities are the planning and conduct of civil information programs to build support for US operations in theater. [14]

In addition to the JTF organizations already mentioned, J-5 (Future Plans), the J-4 (Logistics), and certainly J-2 (Intelligence) all have direct concerns or missions dealing with InfoOps. And this is only the military component of InfoOps.

In addition to military InfoOps, there are diplomatic and economic InfoOps. In foreign countries, where the U.S. maintains a diplomatic mission or embassy, InfoOps are conducted as part of U.S. national policy, under the direction of the Country Team. The Country Team is headed by the Ambassador or Chief of Mission, who has overall responsibility for U.S. policy coordination in his country of assignment. This includes all governmental organizations and agencies, including military missions and personnel not under the command of a combatant commander.

The Country Team is made up of key members of governmental organizations responsible for implementing and supporting U.S. policy including: the CIA station chief, head of the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), the U.S. Information Service (USIS) representative, and other members as desired by the Ambassador. Military members include the Security Assistant Officer and the Defense Attaché.[15] U.S. economic and commercial interests are represented by the Economic Officer. The Department of Justice may have representation on the team in the form of a FBI special agent in charge.

Each organization represented in the country team may be conducting InfoOps to accomplish a specific policy goal or objective. The USIS generally attempts to provide positive information about U.S. national policy and culture through media releases, television and radio broadcasts, and the establishment of libraries.[16] The CIA, in addition to collecting intelligence, may run propaganda campaigns in an effort to support U.S. national objectives. The Economic Officer works to promote American business interests, which may include InfoOps to encourage importing American goods or stronger trade ties between the U.S. and the host nation. The USAID often conducts InfoOps to promote economic stability and self reliance, helping to achieve U.S. national policy goals of political stability in the host nation.

Other agencies or groups that may be conducting InfoOps include NGOs and PVOs. Primarily independent relief providers, these organizations may conduct InfoOps in support of education, public policy and developmental programs, in addition to relief activities. In addition, international and regional organizations such as the United

Nations and the International Red Cross have the resources and expertise to conduct InfoOps.[17] All InfoOps need to be coordinated and deconflicted to ensure unity of effort.

Proposed DOD doctrine for interagency operations at the operational level lays out the following steps for combatant commands that support effective interagency coordination. First, identify all agencies and organizations involved in the operation. Then establish an authoritative interagency hierarchy, define objectives, define courses of action, solicit clear understanding, deconflict priorities, identify resources to reduce duplication and increase coherence in the effort, and define the desired end state and exist strategy.[18]

It is the failure to establish the interagency hierarchy, necessary to enable the next steps, that is the primary obstacle to unity of effort between the military and other governmental organizations. Unity of effort with NGOs, PVOs and international organizations will seldom be achieved base upon a hierarchical structure. Instead, common interests and goals will be the foundation of unity of effort.

The military command structure is easy to establish and is naturally hierarchical. When a military mission is required whether in support of MOOTW or in response to a threat of war, the geographic CINC will designate a Joint Task Force. He will also select a commander and a deputy commander, unless it is a very large operation such as a major regional conflict, e.g. Desert Storm, in which case the CINC will be the commander. The CINC will designate a joint operating area, assign a mission, provide planning guidance and allocate forces. [19]

The interagency structure required for unity of effort is not as cut and dried. Coordination between the military and other USG agencies may occur at in the Country Team or within the combatant command. In a JTF, or Combined Task Force (CTF), the Civil Military Operations Center (CMOC) serves as the primary interface between military Civil Affairs (CA), government organizations, nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), Private Voluntary Organizations(PVOs) and International Organizations. The CMOC purpose is to coordinate the U.S. and multinationals armed forces goals and operations with humanitarian, relief and service organizations.[20] The CMOC is usually placed under the JCMOTF.

With elements of organizations conducting InfoOps spread throughout the JTF, including the CMOC, and the Country Team, it is almost impossible to obtain unity of effort between the military, political and economic components of the informational instrument of power. Current procedures call for the deconfliction and coordination of military InfoOps such as PSYOP, deception, and public affairs to take place in IW/C2W Cell .[21] While solving part of the problem, it is not the answer to assuring unity of effort between all InfoOps in the theater.

The Joint Interagency Information Operations Task Force

What is needed is an organizational structure that enables the effective employment of all components of the informational instrument of power at the operational level. The best way to accomplish this would be through the establishment of a Joint Interagency InfoOps Task Force (JIIOTF). The JIIOTF would be responsible for integration, coordination, and deconfliction all InfoOps in the theater conducted by

the U.S. and allied military, USG, NGOs, PVOs, and international organizations. The primary goal is to achieve unity of effort between all organizations conducting InfoOps in the theater or area of operations. In addition the JIIOTF would provide the organizational framework to translate and integrate strategic level InfoOps into a operational InfoOps strategy, to enable the synchronization of InfoOps, and to provide a conduit for the insertion of National Command Authority level IW programs.

The JIIOTF would normally be commanded by the Deputy Joint Task Force Commander (DCJTF) when in support of military operations. However, when limited military forces are engaged in MOOTW, supporting primarily humanitarian or relief operations, the JIIOTF could have the host nation U.S. Deputy Chief of Mission as the lead agent.

There are several reasons for the choice of the DCJTF to lead the JIIOTF. First, the DCJTF has enough authority to solve any deconfliction issues between various military InfoOps, whereas a component commander, IW Officer, or the Commander of the JPOTF probably would not. Second, the DCJTF is often responsible for interagency coordination for the CJTF; commanding the JIIOTF would assist him in that role. Third, one of the missions of the JIIOTF will be to develop the informational strategy. The DCJTF role as principal assistant to the CJTF will better ensure that the information operational strategy supports the Commander's overall strategy.

Much of the same reasoning holds true for the U.S. Embassy's Deputy Chief of Mission. He would have the seniority, experience, and positional authority required to coordinate an informational strategy in support of humanitarian and relief operations.[22]

With the military playing primarily a supporting role, it would be more appropriate for the Deputy Chief of Mission to command or direct the JIIOTF.

As mentioned above the primary mission of the JIIOTF would be to integrate, coordinate, and deconflict the multiple InfoOps ongoing in the area of operations. An example would be coordinating the strategic InfoOps of the USIA and CIA, with the operational PSYOP plans of the Joint Psychological Operations Task Force. By coordinating via the JIIOTF, traditional national-strategic informational instruments can be used more effectively at the operational level.

By providing direct operational level planning and coordination between the U.S. Department of State (DOS) and military, the diplomatic component of informational power can be brought to bear more quickly, without undermining or duplicating the efforts of the military component.

The JIIOTF would also provide the conduit for the economic component of informational power. For example, InfoOps attacking the quality of an adversary's products or soundness of its financial institutions, could be planned at the operational level to provide synergy with military and diplomatic InfoOps. In addition, the JIIOTF could provide the access via the Department of Commerce to the vast demographical information obtained by governmental and commercial market research projects. This information could be utilized by not only military PSYOP but also by humanitarian InfoOps.

In addition to offensive InfoOps, the JIIOTF would be responsible for coordinating the defensive InfoOps necessary to support the overall mission of the JTF

or other supported organization. This would include the link-up between industry communications suppliers and the military networks. Protection from hackers and adversarial intrusion/interruption of the networks would require coordination between the J-6 , various DOD agencies including DISA and NSA, and the U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ).

In order to make the JIIOTF effective, it is essential to have the right personnel assigned and to provide the commander or director of the JIIOTF the authority to coordinate the InfoOps strategy planning and execution. Although the makeup of the JIIOTF will vary depending on the type of mission or operational it is supporting, any organization conducting InfoOps should be represented on the task force.

For the military, representation from the J-2, J-3 (particularly IW/C2W division), J-5 and J-6 is essential. The PAO and JAG will have important roles. A liaison from the PSYOP unit or JPOTF would be tasked to provide coordination. In addition the deception planners for the JTF would participate in the JIIOTF, although the actual deception plan would be very closely held. Augmentation from the joint organizations such as the Joint Command and Control Warfare Center (JC2WC) and the Joint Warfare Analysis Center (JWAC) could provide needed expertise, experience, and manpower. Depending on the size and type of mission, the JIIOTF is supporting, additional liaisons and planners from components and service organizations such the Air Force Information Warfare Center may be required or desirable. DOD agencies requiring representation would include, but are not limited to, NSA, DISA, and DIA.

The nonmilitary USG organizations requiring representation would include the members or representatives of the Country Team of the host nation and/or adversarial nation if applicable. This would include reps from the CIA, DOS, USIA, and the Department of Commerce. Additional representation would include Department of Justice (FBI), Department of Treasury, and the Agency for International Development. Other possible USG members include the Peace Corps, Department of Energy, and Department of Transportation, again depending on the JTF and operation supported.

Among the international organizations, NGOs and PVOs that might be conducting InfoOps in the JIIOTF's area of operations are the International Red Cross, the World Bank, and CARE. Representatives from these organizations should be encouraged to join the JIIOTF in an effort to ensure the deconfliction of their programs and promote the unity of effort.

Finally the JIIOTF should encourage selected industry and commercial organizations to participate in the task force. Corporations with long-term investments in a country or area of operations may have experience, and area expertise not available elsewhere. In particular, corporate market research databases and commercial advertising expertise could be utilized in developing InfoOps in support of the overall mission, whether primarily military or relief assistance.

JIIOTF Organizational Structure

The JIIOTF organization will vary depending on the type of operation it is supporting; however, the organizational structure should ensure that the primary

mission of integrating, coordinating, and deconflicting all InfoOps to achieve unity of effort is accomplished.

When in support of military operations, the JIIOTF can be broken down into three functional or mission cells. The first is the Information Strategy Cell, the second is the Integration Cell, and the third is the Synchronization Cell. Combined, the three cells will provide the JTF Commander with an effective method of employing the informational instrument of power.

The Information Strategy Cell function is to develop the overall information strategy in support of JTF operations. As such, the members of this cell will include the more senior members of the JIIOTF. In addition, the informational components of the National Security Strategy will need to be translated into operational strategies to support the JTF mission. The Strategy Cell will develop informational COA's which will include deception strategies, propaganda themes, economic and diplomatic information actions and pursue the application of special access programs. In addition, they will develop defensive InfoOps strategies such as countering adversarial propaganda, protecting information "reach-back" capabilities, and protection of alliances from informational attacks.

Because of the sensitive nature of the information strategy, which includes deception, the COA's will be closely held and approved by the CJTF. However, some coordination with industry, coalition partners, and the media will have to take place to develop an effective strategy. Multi-level security will be required, with only the principal planners cleared for all programs.

When supporting MOOTW operations, the Information Strategy Cell will still need to translate national informational strategy into operational informational strategy. There may not be the need for as detailed military planning such as deception and special access programs, but an overall InfoOps strategy will still need to be developed.

The Integration Cell will be responsible for integrating the unclassified, less sensitive and nonmilitary InfoOps into the overall plan. Representatives from NGOs, PVOs, and international organizations will work with military and government organization representatives to maximize the effectiveness of all InfoOps.

The Integration Cell poses the most challenges in achieving synergy for InfoOps. Since there is no hierarchical order, success will depend primarily on cooperation between the agencies and organizations. Emphasis must be placed on shared objectives and reaching a common ground in order to secure unity of effort.[23]

In large scale military operations such as a major theater war, the Integration Cell will initially be concerned primary with obtaining and securing host-nation/alliance support of the JTF mission and discouraging support for the adversary. USG and coalition government organizations, should coordinate the use of the informational component of power to achieve the operational and theater-strategic objectives of the JTF/CTF. As the war winds down, refugee support, rebuilding the infrastructure of vanquished adversaries, and care of the wounded will become primary concerns. As such the role of NGOs, PVOs, and international organizations will expand as they conduct InfoOps in support of humanitarian missions.

In MOOTW, the role of the Integration Cell may be coordinating InfoOps in support of humanitarian and relief efforts from the very beginning. In addition, the military role may be primarily humanitarian or protection, reducing the need for classified planning and use of deception, allowing more military coordination to take place in the Integration Cell.

The third cell of the JIIOTF will be the Synchronization Cell. Its mission will be to monitor InfoOps during execution, ensuring the strategy, deconfliction and coordination are accomplished as planned. The Synchronization Cell will also make recommendations regarding tempo, duration, and phasing of InfoOps, based upon combat assessment and situation development.

When the JIIOTF is supporting war operations, the Synchronization Cell will require displays of the current battle field picture and combat assessment of InfoOps such as PSYOP, deception, and C2 attack. In addition it will require access to sources such as CNN, the Internet and foreign broadcast intercept reports (FBIS), in order to deconflict and manage the tempo of the InfoOps. Representatives from J-2, J-3, the CIA, NSA, and DIA, and the various organizations conducting InfoOps will be needed to supply the expertise required to evaluate the progress of the information campaign.

When the JIIOTF is supporting MOOTW operations, the Synchronization Cell's responsibilities may be somewhat reduced. Information regarding host-nation support, public opinion, morale of the population and other results of the InfoOps being conducted must be evaluated to determine the effectiveness of the operations. The

Synchronization Cell would then make recommendations to improve the operations or prevent adverse or unforeseen consequences.

The overall task organization of the JIIOTF will vary from operation to operation. But whether supporting a major theater war or a small scale relief operation, the mission of the JIIOTF remains to effectively exploit and protect our informational instruments of power and to increase unity of effort towards a common goal.

Challenges to JIIOTF Operations

The primary challenge to effective JIIOTF operations is the lack of formal national procedures governing USG interagency cooperation. Currently interagency cooperation is personality driven, politically motivated, and extremely fragile.[24] Either a Presidential Directive or Congressional legislation is needed to ensure cooperation and establish a hierarchy that would enable better interagency operations. The designation of a lead agency, with the authority to resolve conflicts at the operational level, is required. Until this takes place, military and USG personnel will have to understand the situation and develop working relationships that allow the unity of effort required to conduct effective InfoOps.

Another challenge will be the cooperation of NGOs and PVOs. Generally in MOOTW operations the military and the NGOs/PVOs have the same goals, perhaps with different ideas of how to achieve them. Compromise and understanding will be required, but the military should take the lead in protection and security and let the relief organizations decide how to conduct tasks in their area of expertise.

A third challenge comes from within the military itself. Reluctance to change what in the past has been a successful organizational structure to an untried and significantly different one is understandable. There are also the arguments that the JIIOTF is just one more attempt at empire building and that it means an additional layer of staff types to try to get a plan through. The J-3 in particular may see the JIIOTF as an encroachment upon his authority and responsibility, particularly the transfer of deception planning to the DCJTF and the JIIOTF.

The JIIOTF is not an attempt to subvert IW/C2W from the J-3 or PSYOP from the JPOTF. The JIIOTF mission is to develop an overall Information Strategy and to coordinate, integrate and deconflict the various InfoOps being developed within the JTF with other organizations. The placing of the deception planners under the DCJTF is in keeping with the principles of military deception, particularly centralized control and integration.[25]

The J-3 will still have primary responsibility for operational IW/C2W, but the overall Information Strategy is bigger than just the J-3 or even the military component. As such, the Information Strategy requires an interagency process to fully develop and exploit the information instrument of power.

There are numerous other challenges to the employment of the JIIOTF. Certainly there will be conflicts of interest between organizations, philosophical differences, and varying desired end states between coalition members. However, these and other problems are already present and current organizational structure

doesn't eliminate them. The JIIOTF itself should eliminate some conflicts simply by having everyone at one table and giving them a chance to participate in the process.

Summary

The JIIOTF offers the military commander a more effective way to exploit the information instrument of power, while at the same time obtaining greater unity of effort between the military, diplomatic and economic instruments of power. The result may be a lessened requirement for robust combat forces to support some MOOTW missions. With the declining military budget and force structure, the JIIOTF provides a significant force multiplier effect which in turn may reduce the operational tempo of military personnel. When armed conflict does erupt, InfoOps can provide our side with the operational and strategic advantages necessary to triumph.

It is the ultimate hope and goal that through the coordinated use of InfoOps, crisis situations may be controlled, preventing escalation into armed conflict. To this end the JIIOTF provides the best means available to maximize the unity of effort necessary to exploit the peacekeeping and conflict resolution capabilities inherent in the informational instrument of power.

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[21] Ibid., II-17

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[24] George T. Raach and Ilana Kass, "National Power and the Interagency Process," Joint Forces Quarterly, Summer 1995, 11.

[25] Joint Publication 3-58, *Joint Doctrine for Military Deception*, (Washington: JCS, 31 May 1996), I-3.

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