

A New Emphasis For Information Operations

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A New Emphasis For Information Operations  
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## INTRODUCTION

Information operations<sup>1</sup> (IO) are a "capstone element of combat power...both lethal and nonlethal....We must condition the world to accept [information operations] as an essential element."<sup>2</sup> This quote was from the Joint Task Force (JTF) Commander, Lt Gen B.B. Bell, for the joint exercise Millennium Challenge 2002, as reported by Maier and Rahn. The JTF commander recognized IO as more than just a supporting function. Yet while Joint Vision 2020 acknowledges the importance of information operations, Joint Vision 2020 calls it a "key enabler" and a "supporting function."<sup>3</sup>

Based on this current paradigm, IO is widely considered a supporting function or a "broad-based integrative approach that makes the bow stronger,"<sup>4</sup> as described by the Marine Corps, and not as an "arrow in the quiver" of every commander. This makes IO a force enabler of other warfighting functions and concepts such as logistics and force protection, but not as a warfighting

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1. Information Operations (IO): Actions taken to affect adversary information and information systems while defending one's own information and information systems." (JP 3-13, I-1).

2. Mark W. Maier and Timothy L. Rahn, "Information Operations and Millennium Challenge", *Joint Force Quarterly*, 2004, 87.

3. U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff, *Joint Vision 2020*, (Washington D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, June 2000), 2.

4. U.S. Marine Corps, *Marine Corps Concepts and Programs 2004* (Washington D.C.: HQ, U.S. Marine Corps, 2004), 27.

function itself. To achieve information superiority<sup>5</sup>, the U.S. military mindset of IO must change from that of a supporting function to an essential joint warfighting function, which will require improvements in the areas of planning integration, employment, and measures of effectiveness.

### **BACKGROUND**

The concept of information warfare is not new. Military commanders have been using military deception and psychological operations for centuries. However, there have been many changes and improvements in the information domain over the last couple decades, forcing the military to reexamine how information is used in warfare. According to the Congressional Research Service, "Military planning is shifting away from the Cold War view that power is derived from platforms...as a result, information is now both a tool and a target of warfare."<sup>6</sup>

One major change of Joint Vision 2020 (JV2020) from Joint Vision 2010 is the added emphasis on information superiority

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5. Information Superiority: the capability to collect, process, and disseminate an uninterrupted flow of information while exploiting or denying an adversary's ability to do the same. (JP1-02) Information superiority is achieved in a noncombat situation or one in which there are no clearly defined adversaries when friendly forces have the information necessary to achieve operational objectives. (Joint Vision 2020, 8).

6. Clay Wilson, *Information Warfare and Cyberwar: Capabilities and Related Policy Issues: CRS Report for Congress*, 19 July, 2004 (Congressional Research Service, Library of Congress), 1.

leading to the concept of decision superiority<sup>7</sup>. As stated in JV2020:

The continued development and proliferation of information technologies will substantially change the conduct of military operations. These changes in the information environment make information superiority a key enabler of the transformation of the operational capabilities of the joint force and the evolution of joint command and control.<sup>8</sup>

In Joint Publication 3-13, IO encompasses both war and peacetime operations as well as other related activities. These operations are grouped into five core IO capabilities: psychological operations (PSYOPS), military deception (MilDec), operational security (OPSEC), computer network operations (CNO), and electronic warfare (EW).<sup>9</sup>

Joint Vision 2020 lays out the future for the operational concepts of dominant maneuver, precision engagement, focused logistics, and full dimensional protection in order to achieve full spectrum dominance.<sup>10</sup> Information superiority is considered a supporting function (see Figure 1), yet the same document points out an implication of the IO evolution:

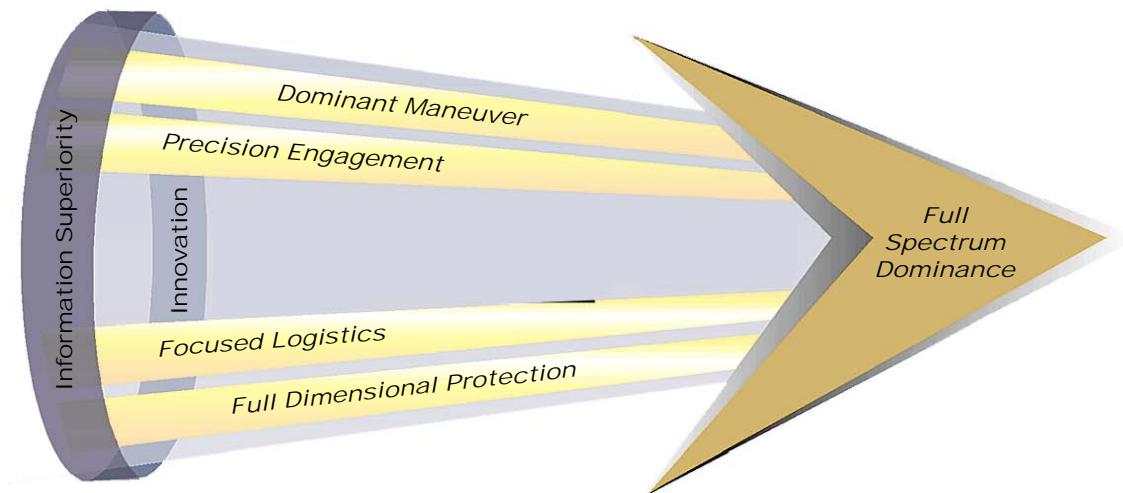
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7. Decision Superiority: Better decisions arrived at and implemented faster than an opponent can react, or in a noncombat situation, at a tempo that allows the force to shape the situation or react to changes and accomplish its mission (Joint Vision 2020, 8).

8. JV2020, 8.

9. U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff, *Joint Publication 3-13, Joint Doctrine for Information Operations* (Washington D.C.: U.S Government Printing Office, 9 October 1998), I-9.

10. U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff, *Joint Vision 2020*, (Washington D.C.: U.S Government Printing Office, June 2000), 2.



**Figure 1: Joint Vision 2020 Operational Concept<sup>11</sup>**

Operations within the information domain will become as important as those conducted in the domains of sea, land, air, and space. Such operations will be inextricably linked to focused logistics, full dimensional protection, precision engagement, and dominant maneuver, as well as joint command and control. At the same time, information operations may evolve into a separate mission area<sup>11</sup>

The quote above leads to the conclusion that IO must be viewed as an essential warfighting function and not just an enabler or supporting function for the other joint operational concepts. This paradigm shift is necessary to achieve information superiority, but will only happen with corresponding improvements in planning integration, employment, and measures of effectiveness.

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11. JV2020, 30.

## IO PLANNING INTEGRATION

According to Maiers and Rahn, IO has become a "core DoD competency."<sup>12</sup> Yet the current military mindset of IO, driven largely by a lack of understanding of IO, does not support this conclusion. The prevailing view is information operations are conducted primarily at the strategic and operational levels of war by a core set of specialized personnel and thus has little application to the front-line tactical forces. This mindset must change in order to achieve information superiority. IO is not the job of a select few. IO must be integrated into the very core of the joint and service planning processes at the strategic, operational, and tactical levels.

Although there have been significant improvements over the last few years in IO planning at the strategic and operational levels, the tactical level units have been lagging. The slow progression in tactical units is due primarily to a lack of training and understanding of IO and how it can affect front-line operations. LtCol McNeive points out,

In order to make tactical IO work it must be institutionalized into normal tactical planning activities. This starts with the extremely important step of having IO as part of the commander's guidance....the concept of targeting the thought process of an opponent should be addressed. Failure of the commander to address IO in his

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12. Maiers and Rahn, 84.

guidance means failure in trying to make it beneficial at the tactical level.<sup>13</sup>

IO is not something tasked to one guy to figure out. IO planning must be integrated from the beginning of an operation and incorporated into the commander's guidance. As such, each and every planner will need to address how their course of action supports or implements the IO guidance.

Major McGinley also recognizes the importance of IO integration in planning when he states, "Effective IO planning requires a framework that focuses the staff, ensuring a plan that supports the commander's concept of operations by integrating IO into a coherent, synchronized plan."<sup>14</sup> Without this level of integration, driven by the commander and addressed by all functional planners, IO will remain a supporting function that is only useful if a staff has time to consider it.

#### **EMPLOYMENT OF INFORMATION OPERATIONS**

The employment of IO is another area that must change in order to achieve information superiority. Currently each military service interprets and implements the joint IO publication in its own way. As a result, various aspects of IO are given more emphasis than others during employment.

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13. James F. McNeive, Lt Col, "Information Operations at the Tactical Level," *Marine Corps Gazette*, June 2003, 52.

14. James E. McGinley, Major, "Information Operations Planning: A Model For the Marine Air-Ground Task Force," *Marine Corps Gazette*, September 2001, 48.



Millennium Challenge 2002 verified this problem: "Capabilities are not well understood by all planners and leaders. There are disparate service centric information operations capabilities, with little agreement on how they should be used together in support of joint operations."<sup>15</sup>

The Air Force has taken the lead in developing information operations by further categorizing the joint concept of IO into three distinct operational areas of electronic warfare (EW), network warfare (NW), and influence operations.<sup>16</sup> As Major Guevin points out, "These three interdependent elements focus on military actions in the electromagnetic, digital, and cognitive target domains respectively."<sup>17</sup> While the Air Force is working hard at employing each aspect of IO, there is little dispute that more emphasis is placed on the EW and NW elements of IO due to technological aspects and relevance to the Air Force mission.

The Marine Corps is also working hard to build IO into its planning process (MCP) and to integrate it into its operations. Like the Air Force, the Marine Corps is trying to implement every aspect of IO, but, for the Marine Corps, more emphasis is

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15. Maiers and Rahn, 84.

16. U.S. Air Force, Air Force Doctrine Document 2-5 "Information Operations," 2 Jan 2002, <<http://www.e-publishing.af.mil/pubfiles/afdc/dd/afdd2-5/afdd2-5.pdf>>, 5 Jan 2005.

17. Paul R. Guevin, Major, "Information Operations," *Air and Space Power Journal*, Summer 2004, 122.

being placed on what the Air Force terms "influence operations", which includes psychological operations, military deception, operations security, counterintelligence, public affairs, and civil affairs. Major Paschall, argues "for the Marines at the tactical level the successful use of IO need only involve...PA, PsyOps, and CMO [civil-military operations]." <sup>18</sup> "These elements," Major Paschall argues "represent the only portions of the entire spectrum of IO that the tactical commander can actually make immediate use of in his zone of action." <sup>19</sup>

In order to achieve information superiority the services will have to work together to combine their areas of expertise to create an integrated employment of IO. Integrated employment includes creating more effective IO weapons that are easier to use and can be employed more effectively at the tactical level in coordination with the employment of strategic and operational level campaigns. Additionally, influence operations should be more integrated into the operations of EW and CNO. This idea was documented from Millennium Challenge 2002:

There are five core capabilities of information operations divided into two camps. On one side are technologists, who provide electronic warfare and computer network attack/defense to affect the electromagnetic spectrum and information systems. On the other are humanists, who conduct PSYOP, military deception, and operations security

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18. Joseph F. Paschall, Major, "Tactical Information Operations in Operation IRAQI FREEDOM," *Marine Corps Gazette*, March 2004, 56.

19. Paschall, 56.

to influence foreign decisionmakers and protect friendly decisionmakers. Unifying both groups into a single core of specialists is key to understanding the capabilities that must be integrated on all levels of warfare.<sup>20</sup>

### **MEASURES OF EFFECTIVENESS**

Measures of effectiveness (MOE) are also an area that must be improved in order to achieve information superiority in the future. Unlike conventional force employment, where results can be seen and physically assessed, information operations target the human decision maker. As such, applying measures of effectiveness and assessing the extent to which an information operation succeeded is currently done after the operation is completed. This means that during an operation there is only speculation as to the effectiveness of the IO campaign.

JV2020 points out that "This problem of 'battle damage assessment' for information operations is difficult and must be explored through exercises and rigorous experimentation."<sup>21</sup> In order to improve MOE for IO, personnel must be trained on indications and warnings of the desired, or undesired, effects of an IO campaign based on the findings of these experiments and exercises. Training will provide an understanding at all levels of combat, which will then increase the identification of appropriate feedback from the local population, enemy forces, as

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20. Maiers and Rahn, 87.

21. JV2020, 29.

well as friendly forces. The feedback must be consolidated by IO planners and intelligence analysts during, not after, a campaign to provide decision superiority for the commander.

In addition to training and analysis, the ability to do virtual Battle Damage Assessment (BDA) throughout a campaign is essential to achieving information superiority. Currently, a computer guy telling a pilot that he thinks he has virtually disabled a missile system is not very comforting to the pilot. The aforementioned exercises, experimentation, and training must be used to improve virtual BDA.

#### **STATUS QUO COUNTERARGUMENT**

An argument can be made that, while very important, information operations will always remain in a supporting role for other warfighting concepts and functions. This argument is the case for today's U.S. forces and, as a result, each service is disjointedly implementing its vision of IO. For instance, tactical forces primarily deal with PSYOPS, public affairs, and civil affairs while strategic and operational level forces deal with the electronic warfare and computer network operations.

The DoD has been talking about IO for over ten years, yet it is still not a widely understood concept outside the service's Information Warfare Centers. If the U.S. military is going to achieve true information superiority by 2020

information operations must be thought of as more than just a supporting function.

### **CONCLUSION**

Decision superiority hinges on the successful implementation of information superiority and information superiority relies on the complete integration of information operations into the joint operational concept. As such, IO must be integrated into every aspect of planning and employment of a military campaign just like core warfighting functions such as logistics or force protection. Along with improvements to planning integration and employment, improvements in IO measures of effectiveness must be made in order to properly take advantage of the effects of IO. Without a change in mindset and shifting the paradigm from IO being a supporting function to a core warfighting function, the information domain will remain elusive and information superiority will not be fully obtained.

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