

Exposed: Disturbing Details of New Pentagon “Perception Management Office”

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Ken Klippenstein, an investigative journalist at The Intercept, has [exposed](#) how the Pentagon very quietly launched a new internal division, dubbed the “Influence and Perception Management Office” (IPMO), in March.

Its existence is not strictly secret, although there has been no official announcement of its launch, let alone an explanation from Department of Defense (DoD) officials as to its raison d’être or modus operandi. Its budget likewise remains a mystery but purportedly runs into the “multimillions.”

Pentagon [financial documents](#) from 2022 offer a laconic and largely impenetrable description of IPMO. The Office, it is said, “will serve as the senior advisor” to Under Secretary of Defense for Intelligence & Security, Ronald S. Moultrie, on “strategic and operational influence and perception management (reveal and conceal) matters”:

It will develop broad thematic influence guidance focused on key adversaries; promulgate competitive influence strategies focused on specific defense issues, which direct subordinate planning efforts for the conduct of influence-related activities; and fill existing gaps in policy, oversight, governance, and integration related to influence and perception management matters. [IPMO]...provides necessary support to National Defense Strategy...to address the current strategic environment of great power competition.”

Nonetheless, references to “reveal and conceal” and “influence and perception management” are tantalizing in the extreme. So too, is IPMO’s position within the U.S. national security structure and the Office’s acting director being intimately tied to the Pentagon’s spookiest operations.

Despite its low-key rollout, IPMO looks set to be a hugely influential new DoD agency in the

future, waging ceaseless information warfare at home and abroad. What makes the new venture all the more sinister is that such capabilities are nothing new; the Pentagon has managed multiple similar, if not identical, operations in the past and continues to do so, despite significant controversy and public backlash.

Indeed, the DoD's [official dictionary](#) has a dedicated definition of "perception management", linking the practice to "psychological operations," which are defined as actions intended to influence the "emotions, motives, objective reasoning, and ultimately the behavior" of target governments, organizations, groups, and individuals:

Actions to convey and/or deny selected information and indicators to foreign audiences to influence their emotions, motives, and objective reasoning as well as to intelligence systems and leaders at all levels to influence official estimates, ultimately resulting in foreign behaviors and official actions favorable to the originator's objectives. In various ways, perception management combines truth projection, operations security, cover and deception, and psychological operations."

This, of course, begs the question of why a new incarnation of what came before and never went away is now being inaugurated by the U.S. defense establishment. As we shall see, no reassuring answers are forthcoming.

"Signature Reduction"

Despite the lack of a public paper trail, a memo outlining IPMO's modus operandi was acquired by Klippenstein. It offers a hypothetical scenario in which the Pentagon "wants to influence Country A's leaders to stop purchasing a weapon system from Country B" because it believes the sale "might jeopardize DoD's military advantage, in some way, if the U.S. ever had to engage in armed conflict with Country A."

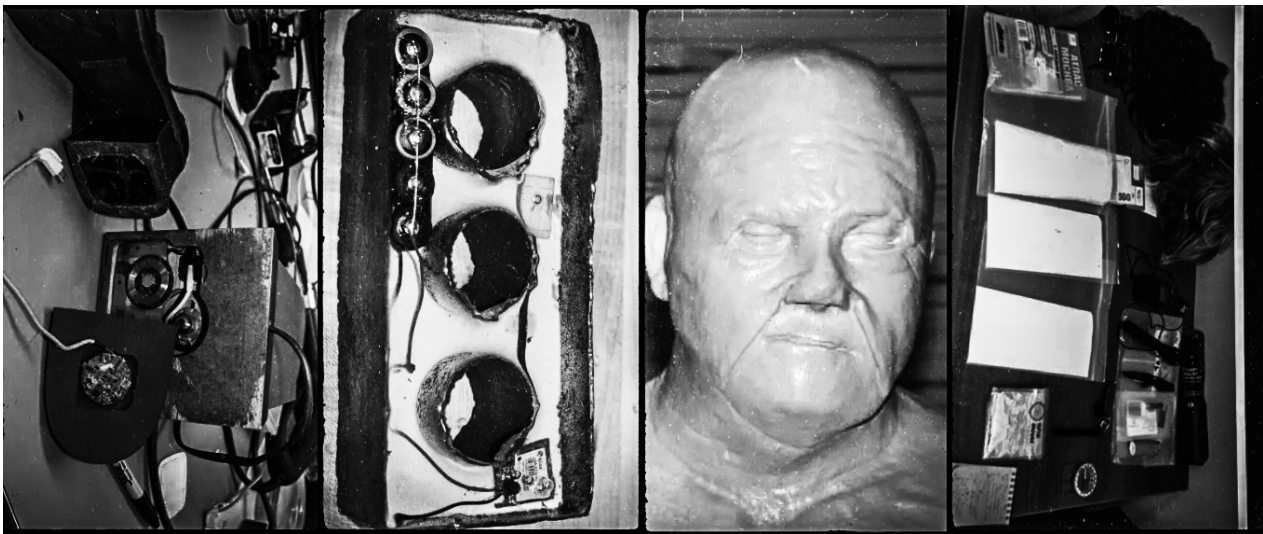
"Assuming IPMO has worked to establish the desired behavior change, how might key influencers be identified that have sway over these leaders' thought processes, beliefs, motives, reasoning, etc. (including ascertaining their typical modes and methods of communication)?" the memo reads. "Thereafter, assuming an influence strategy is developed, how might the DIE [Defense Intelligence Estimate] or IC [Intelligence Community] determine if DoD's influence activities are working (aside from waiting and watching hopefully that Country A eventually stops purchasing the weapons system in question from Country B)?"

The document was signed by IPMO director [James Holly](#), previously Director of Special Programs for the U.S. Joint Special Operations Command (JSOC). During this time, he ran espionage operations for an unnamed paramilitary organization in Iraq and was an intelligence officer for a Combined Joint Task Force in Afghanistan.

Precisely what these roles entailed is not certain. However, that he made the leap from JSOC to IPMO is striking, given the Command is the nucleus of all the Pentagon's spookiest, most sensitive operations. The division very rarely makes the news, but when it does, the stories are invariably remarkable and disturbing. For example, in May 2021, [Newsweek exposed](#) how the Command operates "the largest undercover force the world has ever known" under a program named "Signature Reduction." In all, 60,000 people – "more than ten times the size of the clandestine elements of the CIA" – are part of this secret army, "many working under masked identities and in low profile." Working both at home and overseas, its

operatives carry out covert assignments using civilian cover “in real life and online, sometimes hiding in private businesses and consultancies, some of them household name companies.”

“Dozens of little-known and secret government organizations support the program, doling out classified contracts and overseeing publicly unacknowledged operations. Altogether, the companies pull in over \$900 million annually to service the clandestine force, doing everything from creating false documentation and paying the bills and taxes of individuals operating under assumed names to manufacturing disguises and other devices to thwart detection and identification, to building invisible devices to photograph and listen in on activity in the most remote corners of the Middle East and Africa.”



A series of photos from the Signature Reduction program provided to Newsweek by William Arkin |
Editing by MintPress News

This cloak-and-dagger militia moves entirely in the shadows and may contravene U.S. laws, the Geneva Conventions, basic standards of accountability, and various codes of military conduct. Chief among the latter is the longstanding principle that the military does not conduct covert operations on American soil. Yet, JSOC has circumvented this restriction ever since its founding in December 1980, operating under a veil of almost total official secrecy, all the while often in tandem with the CIA.

In June 1984, [The New York Times](#) outlined how JSOC effectively acted as a law unto itself, quickly evolving far beyond its original remit to “collect intelligence to plan for special military operations” into “a nighttime operation, with its own weapons procurement and research, as well as communications.”

Two months earlier, a senior Pentagon official told elected lawmakers that the Command was not “an agency of interest to the intelligence oversight committee” and refused to answer questions about its activities.

Nonetheless, the *Times* offered a brief overview of what was known about JSOC’s activities over the prior four years. In addition to assisting the [illegal invasion](#) of Grenada, the Command had provided extensive assistance to CIA cloak-and-dagger operations in Central America. In particular, it supported the fascist Contras in Nicaragua, helping the Agency sidestep Congressional restrictions on its brutal efforts to topple the elected left-wing

Sandinista government.

“Prohibited, Covert Propaganda”

JSOC’s involvement in that CIA dirty war is particularly notable given this period gave rise to the [very concept](#) of “perception management” as a legitimate form of psychological warfare to be waged by the CIA, Pentagon, and other government agencies against the domestic population.

The overriding objective of this Reagan administration push was to falsely paint the murderous Contras as heroic freedom fighters. In reality, the Contras, with CIA direction, funding and arms, deliberately targeted civilian infrastructure, including schools and hospitals, slaughtered priests, nuns, labor activists, students, peasants and indigenous citizens.

In turn, the social democratic Sandinistas were transformed into viciously repressive autocrats, ruling Nicaragua with an iron fist and transforming their country into a “beachhead” for Soviet invasion of the U.S. Similar propaganda messaging has been employed in every American proxy war since, from Yugoslavia to Ukraine. All this activity, the full extent of which may never be known, represented egregious violations of the 1948 Smith-Mundt Act, which places strict restrictions on the domestic dissemination of state propaganda.

Take, for instance, the [Office of Public Diplomacy](#), a dedicated pro-Contra propaganda unit run by Reagan’s top National Security Council aide Oliver North, who was [simultaneously working](#) with cocaine traffickers to arm the Nicaraguan “rebels.” The unit was found to have broken a welter of U.S. laws by separate official investigations into the Iran-Contra scandal. The U.S. Comptroller General, for example, concluded the Office engaged in “prohibited, covert propaganda...beyond the range of acceptable agency public information activities.”

ONLY 53¢ A DAY WILL SUPPORT A NICARAGUAN FREEDOM FIGHTER

In many areas of the world there are children who spend their days fighting for survival.

They cry at night but no one answers.

Their parents were abducted by Communist forces because they spoke about "freedom." Some were executed by firing squads, others were shot in the back, still more died in political prisons.

To you this may sound like a nightmare, something you would see on the Late Show. Here in Nicaragua, it is a way of life.

I know. My name is Charley and I am a Nicaraguan counter-Communist. A Contra. A Freedom Fighter.

I have taken up arms against the Soviet Empire and its satellite government in Nicaragua and I need your help.

Last year, your Congress cut off our funding. People like Michael Barnes, Steven Solarz, and Ted Kennedy, who claim to be "friends of the people," said



that it was unethical to fund what here in Nicaragua is the "will of the people." There is no "country" called Nicaragua. Only a nation of people living under a totalitarian regime funded by Cuba and the Soviet Union.

Aren't you as Americans, committed to governments of the people, by the people, and for the people? Isn't that what you fought for just over 200 years ago? If so, please help.

For \$16 a month you can help bring democracy to Central America.

Regular meals, medical attention, and the chance to vote in a free and open election. That's all we want.

In America you have so much. We have nothing. Our very future and the future of the democratic world is at stake.

Please help me and my fellow patriots. We haven't got long.

*Vaya con Dios,
Charley*

SEND DEMOCRACY AROUND THE WORLD

SAVE THE CONTRAS, P.O. Box 26099, Washington, DC 20013-6999

Yes, I want to help Charley and his fellow Freedom Fighters in Nicaragua.

Enclosed is my first month's payment of \$16.

Enclosed is \$192 for one year's supply of food, medicine, and clothing.

I can't send money now, but I will write my Congressman and tell him to support U.S. aid to the Contras.

Name _____

Address _____

City _____

State _____

Zip _____

"Save the Contras" is a project of the College Republican National Fund. Statement of income and expenses available on request.

SAVE THE CONTRAS

Published by the College Republican National Fund, 610 First St. SE, Washington, DC 20001

1985 - College Republican National Fund

An ad placed by the Young Republicans under the cognizance of the Office of Public Diplomacy, March 20, 1985. Credit | NSA Archive

Yet, despite such damning findings, the "perception management" techniques honed by these assorted units, and many of the formal and informal structures contemporaneously created to disseminate CIA, Pentagon, and White House propaganda, did not go anywhere.

[Two decades later](#), in the wake of the 9/11 attacks, the Pentagon under Donald Rumsfeld's leadership struck upon the bright idea of creating the Office of Strategic Influence to

deliberately plant “misleading” black propaganda in the foreign media, which would then be picked up by the U.S. media.

In a perverse twist, precisely this strategy was used by British foreign intelligence service MI6 as far back as 1998 to [lay the foundations](#) for the Iraq War. Under “Operation Mass Appeal”, the agency circulated dubious or even fabricated “intelligence” to editors and journalists on its payroll the world over, influencing the output of leading international news outlets. The spooks sought to “shape public opinion about Iraq and the threat posed by WMD.”

The Office of Strategic Influence operated in secret from its launch in October 2001 until February of the next year, when the mainstream media [caught wind](#) of its existence. Due to intense outcry, just a week later, it was officially shuttered at Rumsfeld’s request. Yet, at a November 2002 [press conference](#), the defense secretary made unguarded remarks starkly indicating it very much lived on thereafter:

The Office of Strategic Influence. You may recall that. And ‘oh my goodness gracious isn’t that terrible, Henny Penny, the sky is going to fall.’ I went down that next day and said fine, if you want to savage this thing, fine, I’ll give you the corpse. There’s the name. You can have the name, but I’m gonna keep doing every single thing that needs to be done. And I have.”

Of World War III and UFOs

The Klippenstein-secured memo suggests IPMO is involved in identical propaganda operations to those described here. It notes the Office “is tasked with the development of broad thematic messaging guidance and specific strategies for the execution of DoD activities designed to influence foreign defense-related decision-makers to behave in a manner beneficial to U.S. interests.”

Given that Washington is again heavily engaged in a Nicaragua-style proxy war in Ukraine, an accompanying propaganda unit would be of enormous use. After all, despite the Western media’s best efforts to whitewash the issue, Nazi sympathies of soldiers and military units remain [stubbornly flagrant](#).

The phenomenon of Swastika tattoo and military patch-toting fighters is so profuse that, earlier this month, the *New York Times* was [prompted](#) to publish an article bemoaning how such National Socialist iconography leaves “diplomats, Western journalists and advocacy groups in a difficult position.” On the one hand, “calling attention to the iconography risks playing into Russian propaganda,” on the other, “saying nothing allows it to spread.” The wider question of why so many Ukrainian nationalists eagerly elect to exhibit such emblems was unexplored.

Fittingly too, in December 2022, independent journalist Jack Murphy [published an investigation](#) alleging the CIA was “using a European NATO ally’s spy service to conduct a covert sabotage campaign inside Russia under the agency’s direction,” in which JSOC was a key player. The Command purportedly supports these operations “with targeting information from intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance platforms, such as drones, that can see and hear deep into Russia.”

Further clues as to the sudden push to formally codify what the Pentagon has been doing

with total impunity for so long may likewise be provided by the online records of private security company [Sancorp Consulting](#), which offers “counter-insider threat solutions, artificial intelligence and machine learning, IT solutions, identity and data activities, intelligence and counterintelligence solutions” to private sector and state clients.

An index of Sancorp’s “past performance” [for customers](#) lists providing “specialized and sensitive administrative, security, policy, operations, and analytic support services” to none other than IPMO. [Since-deleted records](#) from the company’s website indicate it also counts the Pentagon’s All-domain Anomaly Resolution Office (AARO) as a client.



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- Office of the Under Secretary of Defense for Intelligence and Security, [Influence and Perception Management Office - Specialized and Sensitive Administrative, Security](#), Policy, Operations, and Analytic Support Services, (Prime Contract) HQ003422R0164.
- Office of the Under Secretary of Defense for Intelligence and Security, Counterintelligence Analytical Support Services,

This DoD division is charged with investigating UFOs and other unexplained aerial phenomena. The Pentagon has of late exhibited a [pronounced interest](#) in flying saucers, just as it did during the Cold War. Then, the purpose was to bamboozle and bedevil the public while providing cover for experimental U.S. military innovations, aircraft, and testing. There is little cause to believe the DoD’s motives have changed in the present day.

[Declassified documents](#) show that for years, the Navy Office of the Deputy Chief of Naval Operations for Information Warfare, known as N2N6, currently exercises complete control over the dissemination of UFO-related information to American audiences on behalf of the Pentagon. This extends to directing Pentagon divisions to respond to media inquiries and FOIA requests from journalists and the public and how.

Perhaps the Pentagon has decided to bring these responsibilities in-house. Coincidentally, on June 6, an Air Force veteran and former member of the National Geospatial Intelligence Agency [went public](#) with claims that extraterrestrial craft are routinely recovered in secret by the U.S. government.

This shock exposé couldn’t have come at a better time. As the New Cold War ramps up, and ever-more threatening tech is inevitably road-tested in the skies above Area 51 and other shadowy military installations in the U.S. and elsewhere, it is necessary to misdirect public attention away from the known to the unknown and unknowable. Meanwhile, U.S. military chiefs regularly and [openly talk](#) about waging war on China in the very near future – which makes constructing a dedicated propaganda office in advance all the more expedient.

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