

Pentagon's PSYOPs: Information Warfare Using Aggressive Psychological Operations

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Information Operation Roadmap Part 4

✘ The Pentagon's plans for psychological operations or PSYOP in the global information environment of the 21st century are wide ranging and aggressive. These desires are outlined in the 2003 Pentagon document signed by Donald Rumsfeld in his capacity as the Secretary of Defense called the [Information Operation Roadmap](#).

More detail about the origins and purpose of this document can be read in the first part of this series [here](#). Also, a description of the Pentagon's desire to [dominate the entire electromagnetic spectrum](#) and their need to "[fight the net](#)" as outline in the *Information Operation Roadmap* were previously described.

What is a PSYOP?

A PSYOP is not specifically defined in this document but it does provide some insight into the wide ranging activities that are considered PSYOP.

"The customary position was that "public affairs informs, while public diplomacy and **PSYOP influence.**" PSYOP also has been perceived as the most aggressive of the three information activities, **using diverse means, including psychological manipulation and personal threats.**" [emphasis mine] - 26

"One result of public affairs and civil military operations is greater support for military endeavors and thus, conversely these activities **can help discourage and dissuade enemies, which PSYOP does more directly** with its own tactics, techniques and procedures." [emphasis mine] - 10

"PSYOP messages disseminated to any audience except **individual decision-makers** (and perhaps even then) will often be replayed by the news media for much larger audiences, including the American public." [emphasis mine] - 26

"A PSYOP force ready to conduct **sophisticated target-audience analysis** and **modify behaviour with multi-media PSYOP campaigns featuring commercial-quality products that can be rapidly disseminated** throughout the Combatant Commanders area of operations." [emphasis mine] - 63

"PSYOP products must be based on **in-depth knowledge of the audience's decision-making processes** and the factors influencing his decisions, **produced rapidly at the**

highest quality standards, and powerfully disseminated directly to targeted audiences throughout the area of operations.” [emphasis mine] - 6

“Better depiction of the **attitudes, perceptions and decision-making processes** of an adversary. Understanding how and why adversaries make decisions will require improvements in **Human Intelligence (HUMINT) and open source exploitation**, as well as improved analytic tools and methods.” [emphasis mine] - 39

“SOCOM [Special Operations Command] should create a Joint PSYOP Support Element to coordinate Combatant Command programs and products with the Joint Staff and OSD [Office of the Secretary of Defense] to provide **rapidly produced, commercial-quality PSYOP product prototypes consistent with overall U.S. Government themes and messages.**” [emphasis mine] - 15

“SOCOM’s ongoing PSYOP Advanced Concept Technology Demonstration and modernization efforts should permit the **timely, long-range dissemination of products** with various PSYOP delivery systems. This includes **satellite, radio and television, cellular phones and other wireless devices, the Internet** and upgrades to traditional delivery systems such as **leaflets and loudspeakers** that are highly responsive to maneuver commanders.” [emphasis mine] - 15

“PSYOP equipment capabilities require 21st Century technology. This modernization would permit the long-range dissemination of PSYOP messages via new information venues such as **satellites, the Internet, personal digital assistants and cell phones:**

- (U) PSYOP ACTD. Commencing in FY04, SOCOM [Special Operations Command] initiates an Advanced Concept Technology Demonstration (ACTD) to address dissemination of PSYOP products into denied areas. The ACTD should examine a range of technologies including **a network of unmanned aerial vehicles and miniaturized, scatterable public address systems for satellite rebroadcast in denied areas.** It should also consider various message delivery systems, to include **satellite radio and television, cellular phones and other wireless devices and the Internet.**” [emphasis mine] - 65

“Rapid, fully integrated nodal and network analysis providing Combatant Commanders with **holistic kinetic and non-kinetic solutions** for a full range of electromagnetic, physical and human IO [information operations] targets.” [emphasis mine] - 39

“Capabilities such as physical security, information assurance, **counter intelligence and physical attack** make important contributions to effective IO.” [emphasis mine] - 23

Third Party PSYOP

The Pentagon is also willing to use third parties for their PSYOP.

“**Identify and disseminate the views of third party advocates** that support U.S. positions. These sources may not articulate the U.S. position the way that the USG [US Government] would, but that may nonetheless have a positive influence.” [emphasis mine] - 27

Under recommendation number 48 - “Create a Joint PSYOP Support Element” - is the following:

“**Contract for commercial sources** for enhanced product development.” [emphasis mine]
- 64

The use of third party advocates or front groups for the dissemination of US government propaganda is well documented. A couple of recent examples include the illegal payment of [\\$1.6 billion for domestic fake news](#) and [similar activities in Iraq](#) using the Lincoln Group among others.

Virtual PSYOP

Not only is the Pentagon exploiting new and old technology for aggressive behavior modification, they can also practice and refine their techniques in a virtual simulation of the entire world.

From [an article](#) by Mark Beard:

“U.S defense, intel and homeland security officials are constructing a parallel world, on a computer, which the agencies will use to test propaganda messages and military strategies.”

“Called the Sentient World Simulation, the program uses AI routines based upon the psychological theories of Marty Seligman, among others. (Seligman introduced the theory of “learned helplessness” in the 1960s, after shocking beagles until they cowered, urinating, on the bottom of their cages.)”

“Yank a country’s water supply. Stage a military coup. SWS will tell you what happens next.”

“The sim will feature an AR avatar for each person in the real world, based upon data collected about us from government records and the internet.”

How useful do you think your new MySpace or Facebook account is in helping the Pentagon develop a detailed psychological profile of you? Do you think they would be shy in exploiting such a valuable source of personal data?

AIDS Awareness

PSYOP in the past, however, often was used to support U.S. Government public diplomacy and information objectives with non-adversarial audiences. These actions include counter-drug, demining and **AIDS awareness programs** in friendly countries.” [emphasis mine] - 25

It is a minor point in the context of this document, but it is worth reflecting on why US military PSYOP were used for AIDS awareness.

Are There Any Limits to Information Warfare?

An obvious question arises from the description of PSYOP described by the *Information Operation Roadmap*, are there any limits? Can PSYOP be conducted on the American public or just foreign audiences? On adversaries or non-adversaries? Can they be performed during peacetime? [My next article](#) will attempt to show just how few limits there actually are.

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