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CYBERWAR 2.0: Myths, Mysteries, and Realities
AFCEA Press, 1998

Operationalizing IO in Bosnia-Herzegovina

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*"The Army's ability to use information to dominate future battles will give the United States a new key to victory, I believe, for years, if not for generations to come."*¹

William S. Cohen, Secretary of Defense

Even before taking his division to Bosnia-Herzegovina in November 1996, MG Montgomery C. Meigs, Commander of the 1st Infantry Division (IID), knew that Information Operations (IO) would play a key role in supporting the peacekeeping mission. An experienced field commander, Meigs was well aware of the extremely complex issues that made Bosnia-Herzegovina a volatile area. His mission was one of the most challenging assignments a military commander can face—use non-lethal means, if possible, to ensure that three rival ethnic groups; the Serbs, Bosniacs, and Croats; continue to comply with the terms a peace agreement they did not fully support.

In October 1996, one month before deploying to Bosnia, Major General Meigs asked the Land Information Warfare Activity (LIWA) to assist in the development and execution of an Information Campaign for his area of operations. The Army established the LIWA in 1995 to assist Land Component Commanders plan, coordinate, and execute IO in joint and multi-national environments.² To perform this mission, the LIWA maintains a cadre of personnel technically and operational proficient in IO. Although they routinely participate in Warfighter Exercises and Advanced Warfighting Experiments, this would be their first multi-national peacekeeping mission.

Just before Thanksgiving 1996, the LIWA sent an IO Field Support Team (FST) to the IID (Forward) Headquarters in Tuzla. The team worked with MG Meigs and his staff to implement the first Information Campaign supporting a multi-national peacekeeping force since the publication of FM 100-6, Information Operations. This article describes the planning process used and discusses some of the important lessons learned.

The Operational Environment

Bosnia-Herzegovina has a long and turbulent history. Originally part of the Roman Empire, the area was conquered by the Ottoman Turks, and administered by the Austro-Hungarian Empire. These historical events are largely responsible for the Bosniacs, Serbs, and Croats adopting different religions and developing distinct cultural backgrounds.

When Yugoslavia disintegrated in June 1991, Slobodan Milosheвич, president of the Serb Republic, tried to consolidate Serb territory. A civil war erupted. During the next four years, the warring factions committed numerous human rights violations. This included mass killings and murder, systematic rape, torture, and other crimes against humanity.³

In October 1995, the warring factions agreed to a cease-fire. Three months later, the Presidents of Bosnia, Croatia, and Serbia signed the Dayton Peace Agreement (DPA) in Paris.

Although the fighting subsided, the former warring factions continued to mount aggressive information campaigns using disinformation, distorted or incomplete reporting, manipulation of national and international media, public statements and accusations, intimidation, and orchestrated media events.

Mission Analysis

After studying the situation, MG Meigs identified several high-priority "problem sets" for his staff to focus on. The first dealt with disputed territorial issues that could easily lead to armed conflict. These included the Brcko Arbitration Decision and the resettlement of Doboj and the Sapna Thumb Region. The second consisted of significant issues that are directly related to mission success. These included Displaced Persons and Returnees (DPRE), municipal elections, enforcement of law and order, and economic development. The division commander also identified Force Protection as inherently critical to overall mission success. This was due to the dangers of this environment and the potential negative impact that an incident would have on U.S. public opinion.

Commander's Intent

Next, the division commander defined his information campaign strategy. First, he wanted to use every means at his disposal to convey information to desired audiences, like local politicians, military and police leaders, and the general public. Second, he wanted to shape audience behavior by influencing known pressure points. For example, stress to entity military leaders that the frequency of weapons storage site inspections is closely tied to their cooperation and continued compliance with the DPA.

Several imperatives guided the implementation of this strategy. First, the division commander wanted to quickly respond to propaganda and disinformation. Second, he wanted to leverage the truth and stress peaceful cooperation. Third, he wanted to hold public officials accountable for their actions.

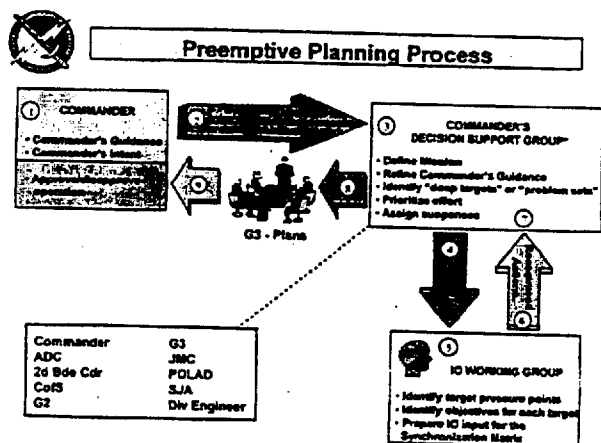


Figure 1. The Preemptive Planning Process

The IID established an innovative preemptive planning process to improve their ability to shape the "battlespace." The division built a process to engage "deep targets" using a mix of capabilities like maneuver, fire support, intelligence, public affairs, civil affairs, and psychological operations (PSYOP). Since the preemptive planning process included the major IO elements, it generally mirrored the methodology described in *FM 100-6*.

IO Plan or Annex

One of the first steps was to prepare the IO Annex to the Task Force Eagle operations order. This document served as the cornerstone for all IID IO activity. The IO Annex included data on all three ethnic groups; as well as information regarding the friendly IO mission, commander's intent, IO goals and objectives, IO capabilities, tasks and responsibilities; and risk assessment. Separate appendices were prepared for each problem set identified by the division commander. Figure 2 shows the structure of the IO Annex used by IID.

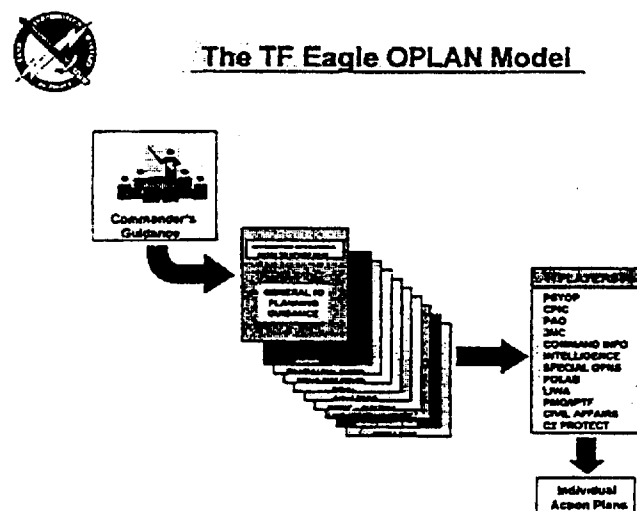


Figure 2. Structure of the IO Annex format

Staff Functions. The IID (forward) staff was fully operational when the LIWA FST arrived in Bosnia-Herzegovina. Most staff elements performing IO functions acted autonomously. To synchronize their efforts, the Chief of Staff (CofS) asked the LIWA FST to manage the division's IO program. Although doctrine gives the G3 primary responsibility for IO, the IID Chief of Staff (CofS) assumed this task because IO spanned several different staff functions. While working for the CofS, the LIWA FST frequently interfaced with the G2 and G3 to maintain both intelligence and operations situational awareness. They also interfaced with staff elements not normally found at

division level—such as a Political Advisor (POLAD) and the Joint Military Commission (JMC). Figure 3 shows the division's key IO players and their primary functions.

The Commander's Decision Support Group (DSG). The IID established a DSG to advise the division commander on operational issues. Although not designed specifically for IO, the DSG reviewed IO problem sets, established IO goals and objectives, identified critical information requirements, instituted planning timelines, and issued specific planning guidance. DSG sessions provided an excellent opportunity for the division commander and his senior advisors to exchange ideas. The IID DSG was composed of the division commander, assistant division commander, CofS, 2nd Brigade Commander (who commanded both U.S. battalion-size task forces in the American

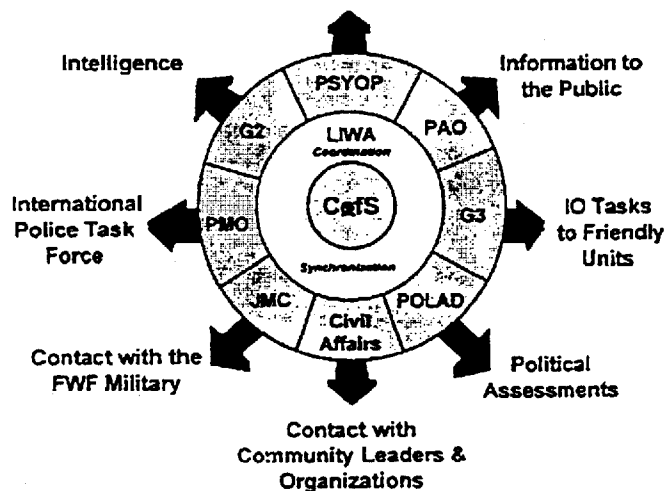


Figure 3. Key IO Staff Elements and primary functions

sector), the G2 and G3, the senior member of the JMC, Staff Judge Advocate (SJA), POLAD, and Division Engineer. The IID normally held DSGs twice each week.

The division commander designated a particular problem set for further investigation prior to convening the DSG. Generally, he made his selection from the list mentioned earlier. In some instances; however, he asked the DSG to examine an entirely new issue, like resettlement in the Gajevi area.

Intelligence Assessment. Armed with the division commander's preliminary guidance and intent, and input from the DSG, the G2 completed an all-source intelligence assessment. During this task, he directed the Analysis and Control Element (ACE), National Intelligence Support Team (NIST), and others to identify and rank likely threat courses of action, trigger/decision points, timing of critical events, expected threat reaction to friendly or third party actions, candidate target audiences and decisionmakers, and "pressure points" to influence audience behavior. The LIWA FST maintained a close working relationship with the G2 and ACE. This enabled the LIWA FST to keep the division IO Annex in synch with current intelligence.

Battle Staff Planning. Following the intelligence assessment, the G3 convened a meeting of the division Battle Staff. The Battle Staff reviewed how the division's Battle Field Operating Systems (BOS) could influence the situation. The IID developed a Synchronization Matrix (SM) to capture this information. Across the top of the matrix were anticipated threat actions, trigger points, and timelines identified by the G2. Down the left side was a column listing each BOS. The Battle Staff completed the SM by describing how each BOS should respond to entity actions identified by the G2. The G3 and LIWA FST used the SM to deconflict and synchronize IO activity. Since it listed tasks and responsibilities over time, the completed SM served as an excellent outline for the preparation of an operations plan or order.

Information Themes. A significant aspect of the division's Information Campaign was the presentation of truthful information to counter disinformation disseminated by some of the local media. As Figure 4 depicts, the development and subsequent dissemination of information themes required the active participation of the CofS, G3, G2, PSYOP, PAO, CPIC, POLAD, JMC, and others. The LIWA FST sent all candidate themes to the division commander for his personal approval.

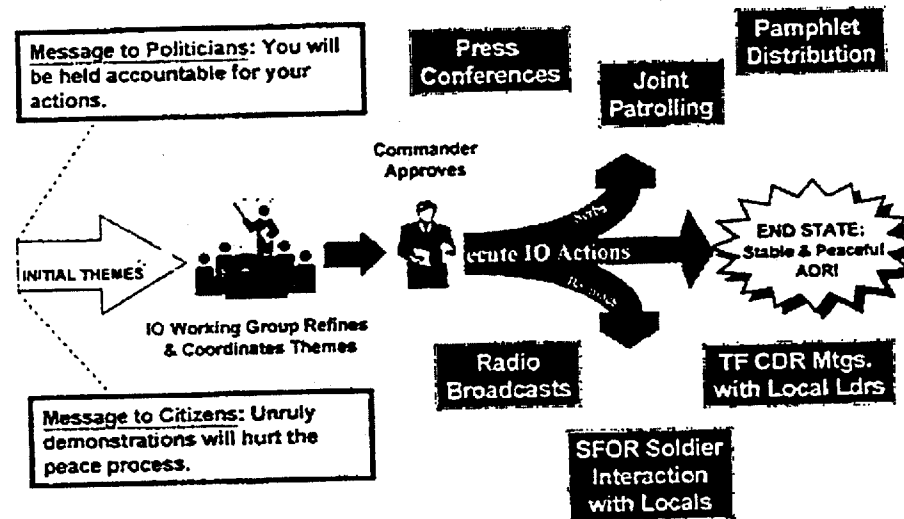


Figure 4. Information themes

IO Means. The IID had several ways to convey information to target audiences. These included PSYOP radio messages, handbills, loudspeaker broadcasts, magazine and newspaper articles; Coalition Press Information Center (CPIC) press conferences, press releases, public affairs media announcements, live TV and radio interviews; the IID Internet Homepage; Civil Affairs contact; POLAD meetings; JMC sponsored Bilateral Meetings (BILATs); and participation during International Housing Committee meetings. The division made an effort to develop new methods to convey information to the target audience. For example, the LIWA FST helped the division establish a contract

with a local radio station to air pre-recorded messages. Over time, the IID PSYOP element made similar arrangements with 24 local radio stations.

Implementation. The IID developed an IO Implementation Matrix (IM) to further refine IO planning. The IM provided specific information about each event listed on the SM; like timing, purpose, audience(s), information theme(s), responsible element(s), and expected response. The LIWA FST used this information to update the division commander and staff. In addition to keeping the commander informed, these briefings gave him the opportunity to ask questions, issue guidance, and obtain feedback.

Figure 5 shows the complexity of the information campaign developed for one of the division commander's high priority problem sets. The numbers across the middle of the chart represent the 22 day period surrounding a critical event. Each uniquely colored box in the legend represents a different IO means used to convey approved information themes to IO audiences. The boxes above each date show the multiple means used that day.

Feedback. The final step in the IO process is "Feedback." This involves collecting and assessing responses to friendly IO. As *FM 100-6* points out, "The challenge of information Battle Damage Assessment (BDA) is to be able to assess the effects of our efforts without the benefit of physical confirmation. The effects may well be trends, activities, and patterns in future adversary actions."⁴ The division used Civil Affairs, PSYOP, Special Operations, and Intelligence teams; as well as maneuver elements; to survey the perceptions and attitudes of the local population. The division also received feedback from other sources like local newspapers, radio and television broadcasts, and the Internet. IO activity was adjusted based upon survey results.

New IO Formats and Worksheets

The IID and LIWA FST developed the following IO worksheets and matrices to guide the process described above:

- **Pressure Point Identification Worksheet (PPIW).** The PPIW provides the IO planner with a systematic way to identify ways to influence target audiences.

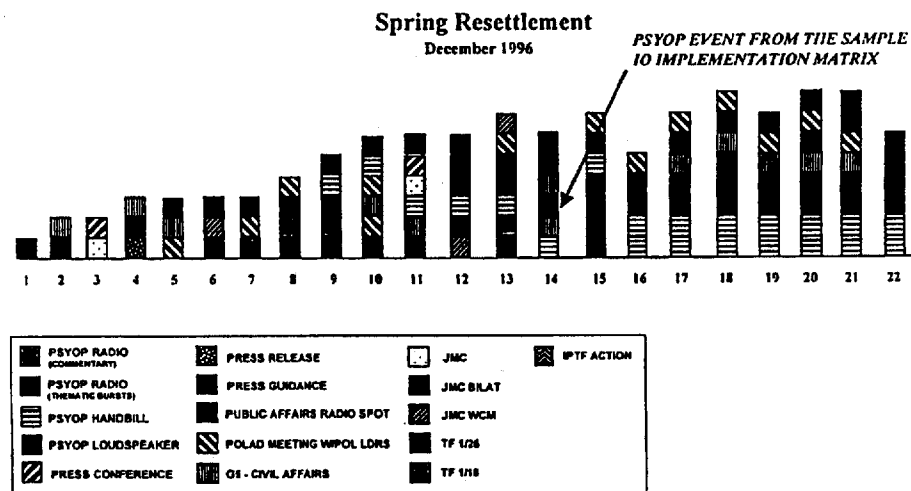


Figure 5. Separate IO events

- **IO Planning Worksheet (PW).** The IO planner uses the PW to determine how and when to influence each pressure point.

- **Synchronization Matrix (SM).** The SM shows how various BOSs can influence priority IO audiences. The SM is used to deconflict and synchronize IO activity. In Bosnia, the G3 and LIWA FST used the SM to reduce conflicts involving executions, targets, and timing.

- **IO Implementation Worksheet (IW).** The IW is used to record additional information about each IO event found on the SM. In addition to identifying the attack "subsystem," the worksheet identifies the specific information themes that will be used for each IO audience.

- **IO Implementation Matrix (IM).** The IM chronologically lists all IO executions for each IO function. Information from the IM is carried forward to the optional IO Implementation Graphic.

- **O Implementation Graphic (IG).** The IG graphically portrays scheduled IO activity during a specific time period.

Lessons Learned

Maintain the Commander's personal involvement. The commander's personal involvement is extremely important. Fortunately, MG Meigs was a very strong proponent for the use of IO. He recognized its contribution to mission success and noted on several occasions that it provided him one of the few means to influence the situation. He continuously challenged his staff to find better ways to use information as a force multiplier. His staff responded by developing new IO TTP and capabilities.

Ensure Public Affairs and PSYOP work together, but maintain their independence. Current IO doctrine stipulates that "a separation between Public Affairs and PSYOP functions must be preserved to maintain the credibility of Public Affairs spokespersons and products."⁵ In Bosnia, the CPIC, PAO, and PSYOP worked together to identify potential opportunities, map strategy, and deconflict information products. Although guided by different policy and processes, they shared several common tasks like countering propaganda and disinformation. Even though they worked closely on many matters, they still maintained their independence.

Consider assigning overall IO staff responsibility to the CofS. Current doctrine gives the G3 overall staff responsibility for IO.⁶ In Bosnia-Herzegovina, the IID CofS controlled the division's IO effort. This worked well because IO tasks routinely crossed staff boundaries. Doctrine writers should examine this arrangement and determine if a permanent change to Army IO doctrine is warranted.

Streamline the PSYOP product approval process. In particular, the PSYOP Task Force (POTF) should issue operational guidelines, not exercise release authority over every product. The division commander should have local release authority for PSYOP products, as long as he or she operates within established guidelines. This would maximize flexibility and enable the commander to react faster to adversary propaganda and disinformation. In a related issue, the Division PSYOP Support Element should be provided with, or have ready access to media production capabilities (print and audiovisual).

Obtain a demographic study of the operational area. Such a study is an essential part of the IO preparation of the battlefield. It should focus on cultural information such

as population biases, perceptions, predispositions, relevant public issues, key decisionmakers, decisionmaking processes, media capabilities, educational level of the population, reliance upon the media, etc. Army IO doctrine must recognize the importance of IO preparation of the battlefield by establishing related tasks, responsibilities, methodology, and formats.

Document and disseminate IO Tactics, Techniques and Procedures (TTP). Initially, the lack of IO TTP forced the IID to use a trial and error approach to IO planning. This was overcome by developing new TTP. The Army should exploit the lessons learned in Bosnia-Herzegovina by documenting and disseminating new IO TTP. This information can be spread by mobile training teams, participation during exercises, instruction at Army service schools, and changes to *FM 100-6*.

Seek predictive intelligence. Predictive intelligence initiates the wargaming and identification of possible courses of action. One of the most significant contributions that intelligence can make is to accurately predict future events. This is often an extremely difficult task. Predictive intelligence gives the division the lead time necessary to develop possible courses of action and identify IO products. The division commander insisted that his G2 provide him with predictive intelligence on likely entity courses of action. The G2's predictions enabled the staff to anticipate key events and develop corresponding plans and operations.

Exploit the capabilities of the Internet. Access to the Internet enabled the LIWA FST to gather information from a variety of sources such as the Army's Center for Lessons Learned, United Nations, US Army Europe, Organization for Security and Cooperation Europe, World Bank, and the US State Department. The team monitored dozens of Internet web sites and newsgroups for information on Bosnia. This provided biographic data on key leaders, maps, diagrams, historical reports, and cultural and demographic information. It also enabled the LIWA FST to monitor adversary propaganda and disinformation.

Expand the IO Plan format in *FM 100-6*. First, the IO plan should identify psychological factors (biases, predispositions, and perceptions) that affect the opponent's decisionmaking process. The plan should also list: IO audiences; friendly IO goals and objectives; friendly IO resources and capabilities; problem sets; information themes; and a risk assessment.

Find ways to maintain contact with the local population while continuing to protect the force. Contact with the local population is an important way to communicate information and obtain feedback about their opinions and attitudes. While Civil Affairs and PSYOP teams regularly interface with the population, most soldiers, due to the force protection requirements, seldom deal with the local population. This has curtailed an important IO resource—personal contact. The U.S. Information Agency observed this after a recent public opinion survey. A post survey assessment stated: "...it was very clear from the survey that the more SFOR contingents got to meet the local people the more support they enjoyed."⁷ Commanders must evaluate potential risks and exploit every opportunity to safely interface with the local population.

*"We are doing lots of things with the population, but have not gotten the word out on what we are doing, nor have we made the world aware of our efforts."*⁸

Turkish Officer assigned to Task Force Eagle

Learn to operate in a multi-national environment. Task Force Eagle is composed of military units from several nations. Some of these units understand IO principles and concepts, while others do not. To ensure maximum participation, the LIWA FST worked with representatives from each foreign military unit. The purpose was to solicit their cooperation, provide necessary training, and synchronize their efforts. Their work appears to be paying dividends. Recently, the NORDPOL Brigade (composed of soldiers from Denmark, Finland, Norway, Poland, and Sweden) began bi-weekly radio shows and press conferences. They even designated an IO staff officer to coordinate all IO activity for the brigade. He is responsible for coordinating PSYOP and Civil Affairs in the NORDPOL sector, as well as providing feedback to the LIWA FST. The Russian Brigade is helping to arrange PSYOP broadcasts in their sector. The Turkish Brigade, who have been heavily involved with humanitarian operations, are just now realizing the value of IO as a means to capitalize on their efforts.

Conclusions

Since Vietnam, Army leaders have faced a broad spectrum of military contingencies, ranging from a conventional conflict in the Middle East, to peacekeeping and stabilization operations in Grenada, Panama, Haiti, Somalia, and most recently Bosnia. In each case, IO played an significant role.

One year ago, the Army published *FM 100-6*, the Army's capstone doctrine for IO. This event signaled the Army's recognition of the importance of IO as a major contributor to military operations at all levels. This doctrine serves as the foundation for the development of new IO TTP and training.

The IID and the LIWA applied the new doctrine in Bosnia-Herzegovina. With the strong leadership of MG Meigs, and hard work and innovation by his staff, they developed a process that enabled IID to plan and execute a synchronized Information Campaign in one of the world's most complex operational environments.

Endnotes

¹ William S. Cohen's remarks made during a visit to the Advanced Warfighting Experiment, quoted by GEN Dennis J. Reimer, Chief of Staff of the Army (CSA), in his e-mail message, Subject: CSA Random Thoughts While Running 11 Apr 97, sent 14 Apr 97.

² US Army *Field Manual 100-6, Information Operations* (Washington, DC: Headquarters, Department of the Army, Aug 9, p. 6-7.

³ U.S. Department of State, Bosnia Fact Sheet: *Human Rights Abuses in the Balkans*, Updated and released by the Bureau of Public Affairs, 11 Dec 95

⁴ *FM 100-6*, assessing battle damages, p. 4-7.

⁵ *Ibid.*, discussion of the need to separate Public Affairs and PSYOP, p. 6-7

⁶ *Ibid.*, discussion of staff responsibilities, pp. 6-6 and 6-7.

⁷ U.S. Information Agency paper: *Analysis of U.S. Information Agency Research Report - Public Opinion in Bosnia-Herzegovina, Volume IV: One Year of Peace*, Feb 97.

⁸ Comment made by a Turkish Staff Officer to a member of the LIWA FST on 28 Apr 97.

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