

# PSYOP, Public Diplomacy and Public Affairs. Information Warfare Without Limits

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Theme: [Intelligence](#), [US NATO War Agenda](#)

The 2003 Pentagon document entitled [Information Operation Roadmap](#) describes the need to [dominate the entire electromagnetic spectrum](#), [‘fight the net’](#), and use [psychological operations to aggressively modify behaviour](#). But one major question remains; are there any limits to information warfare?

For further reference see The author’s [previous article](#) describing the major thrust of this document.

The present article is Part Five of a Series of five articles

From the Pentagon’s *Information Operation Roadmap*:

“In the past some basic similarities and dissimilarities between PSYOP [psychological operations], support to public diplomacy and public affairs generally have been accepted. Historically all three used **truth to bolster credibility**, and all three addressed **foreign audiences, both adversary and non-adversaries**. Only public affairs addressed **domestic audiences**. In addition, all three activities sought a positive impact for USG [US Government] interests, but with some differences in the methods employed and objectives sought. 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

There is a lot happening in this paragraph, first, there is the almost humorous statement; “truth to bolster credibility”. Does anyone remember WMDs, Saddam and 9/11, maybe some uranium from Niger? Do you believe these examples of public affairs were to inform or influence?

Secondly, “USG interests” are by no means the same as the interests of the average American. Thirdly, the concept that only public affairs is being addressed to domestic audiences, is simply absurd given the ability of information to pass across borders. This document even admits as much:

“Impact of the global village. The increasing ability of people in most parts of the globe to **access international sources makes targeting particular audiences more difficult**. Today **the distinction between foreign and**

**domestic audiences becomes more a question of USG [US Government] intent rather than information dissemination practices:**

PSYOP is restricted by both DoD [Department of Defense] policy and executive order from targeting American audiences, our military personnel and news agencies or outlets... However, **information intended for foreign audiences, including public diplomacy and PSYOP, increasingly is consumed by our domestic audience** and vice-versa... 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

So there you have it, "the distinction between foreign and domestic audiences becomes more a question of US government intent rather than information dissemination practices". Therefore, the American public is fair game for all forms of US government propaganda, be it, public affairs, public diplomacy or PSYOP. Remember, PSYOP use "diverse means, including psychological manipulation and personal threats" among [many other things](#).

It should also be highlighted that PSYOP are only **restricted** not **prohibited** from being used on the American public. If that loophole is not large enough, the distinctions between the tactics of public affairs, public diplomacy and PSYOP are elaborated in Appendix C of the *Information Operation Roadmap*. The very last task listed for PSYOP is: "when called upon, support to local public affairs activities".

Appendix C of this document is well worth the one page read ([pg 71](#)). Some other highlight include:

Public Affairs:

- "Rapid Response/Truth Squads and "Briefings Plus" "
- "Humanitarian road shows"
- "Media embeds"
- "Combat Camera products on events not accessible to news media"

Public Diplomacy:

- "Content of speeches or OP/ED pieces by senior DoD [Department of Defense] officials to foreign audiences"
- "Talking points for private exchanges with foreign leaders"
- "Overt dissemination of USG [US Government] policy. e.g. Asia-Pacific Forum"

PSYOP:

- "Radio/TV/Print/Web media designed to directly modify behaviour and distributed in theatre supporting military endeavors in semi or non-permissive environments"
- "When called upon, support to theatre public diplomacy"
- "DoD advisors to assist friendly forces in developing PSYOP programs"

## **Changing Definitions**

Definitions are another great tool if you are trying to deceive. As described above the definitions of and distinction between public affair, public diplomacy and PSYOP are left intentionally vague. Lawyers make a living out of this type of deception and their hands are all over this document.

“PSYOP **should** focus on support to military endeavors (exercises, deployments and operations) in non-permissive or semi-permissive environments (i.e. when adversaries are part of the equation).

- (U) However, PSYOP forces and capabilities may be employed to support U.S. public diplomacy as part of approved theatre security cooperation guideline. In this case PSYOP personnel and equipment are not conducting a PSYOP mission, but rather are providing military support to public diplomacy.” [emphasis mine]
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Get that? If PSYOP forces and equipment are used in support of military endeavours, it is a PSYOP mission. If PSYOP forces and equipment are used in support of public diplomacy, it is public diplomacy.

## A Quick Recap

A close read of the above quotes reveal that information operations, specifically PSYOP, can be used on both domestic and foreign audiences, in non-permissive or semi-permissive environments, and on adversary and non-adversary. Are there any other limits?

## Peace, Crisis and War

“The Department’s concept of IO [information operations] should emphasize **full spectrum IO** that makes a potent contribution to effects based operations across the **full range of military operations during peace, crisis and war**. [emphasis mine]” - 7

“Peacetime preparation. The Department’s IO concept should **emphasize that full-spectrum information operations are full-time operations requiring extensive preparations in peacetime... Well before crises develop**, the IO battlespace should be prepared through intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance and extensive planning activities... Similarly, considerable effort should be made to characterize potential adversary audiences, and particularly senior decision-makers and decision-making processes and priorities. If such human factors analysis is not conducted **well in advance of the conflict**, it will not be possible to craft PSYOP themes and messages that will be effective in modifying adversary behaviour” [emphasis mine] - 8

“Clear, unambiguous and streamlined DoD [Department of Defense] oversight and policy that empowers Combatant Commanders to execute **full spectrum IO before, during and after combat operations**.” [emphasis mine] - 20

## Denied Areas

“Improvements in PSYOP capability are required to rapidly generate audience specific, commercial-quality products into **denied areas**.” [emphasis mine] - 26

“Projecting electronic attack into **denied areas by means of stealthy platforms**.” [emphasis mine] - 62

## Conclusion

Does the Pentagon define any real limits to information warfare? Information operations can be used on both domestic and foreign audiences, in non-permissive or semi-permissive environments, on adversary and non-adversary, during peace, crisis and war, and in denied areas. Should we really expect anything less? They did tell us that their goal was full spectrum dominance.

*This article is Part 5 of a five part series. Click below for related articles by Brent Jessop.*

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