MILITARY-MEDIA RELATIONS: CAN THE MEDIA BE A FORCE MULTIPLIER?

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Information is power, especially in this information age. The media moulds national and international opinion and can be a potent force multiplier.

Kargil Review Committee Report,
From Surprise to Reckoning

One of the most dramatic developments in contemporary warfare is the emergence of the news media as a powerful instrument of war. While the "Fourth Estate" does transmit news, it is important to national security because of its influence. This is because winning modern wars is as much dependent on carrying domestic and international public opinion as it is on defeating the enemy on the battlefield. Soldiers understand fighting, journalists understand communicating, yet neither knows that the political impact of combat depends on how the fighting is communicated. Thus, both sides need one another. Today's military commanders stand to gain more than ever before from working together with the media and shaping their output.

The media provides the military with a global stage to send its message and execute its mission. It also has great potential as a force multiplier, a source of intelligence and a resource for conducting Psychological Operations (Psy Ops).

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The importance of the media in India's first television war can be gauged by the fact that the Kargil Committee Report devoted a separate section to this issue. The report noted that while the coverage was satisfactory, it was apparent that the media lacked training in military matters and the armed forces lacked the training to facilitate the task of the media.

The Indian Army Doctrine states that the seven forms of Information Warfare(IW) are Command and Control Warfare, Intelligence-Based Warfare, Electronic Warfare, Psychological Warfare, Cyber Warfare, Economic Information Warfare and Network-Centric Warfare. It also states that Psychological Warfare is achieved through mass media such as newspapers, radio and television broadcasts and distribution of leaflets. However, the association of the media with psychological operations, deception operations and perception management activities risks the loss of credibility of the military's media activities popularly known as Public Affairs (PA) in the Western countries. In the Indian context, it is called Public Information(PI). In all doctrines of the Western armed forces, it is emphatically stated that PA activities will not be used for Psy Ops or deception purposes. There is a serious dichotomy here. The importance of Information Warfare (IW), with the media as a force multiplier, has to be understood and it has to be correctly used as a weapon of decision making, a weapon of success.

In this essay, the impact of the new media, military-media relations, use of the media as a force multiplier, role of the media in Counter Insurgency (CI) Ops and the doctrine dichotomy of PI and IW will be discussed.

MEDIA TODAY

Professionalism is grossly lacking. There are hardly any experts. The media likes to discuss persons rather than issues. Short memory of the reader is being exploited to the best by the media. Systematic reorientation of the media is taking place with focus on consumerism and immunisation of the reader.

- Arun Shourie

Today, the media, though multinational in organisation, must increasingly focus on regional niche markets. News is a business, and polls and focus groups inform editors that the priorities of the public are local news first, foreign news last. CNN, Fox News and others have begun regional production to feed "foreign" news to the markets where it is not foreign. Gone are the days when Rajiv Gandhi had to listen to BBC to learn about the assassination of Mrs Indira Gandhi. With the advent of English and regional news channels, very few people see these foreign TV channels as their TRP ratings would testify.

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Because the Press is fragmented, competitive, sometimes ignorant of military realities and constantly caught between the demands of the market and those of journalistic ethics, the quality of coverage of military events is inevitably uneven at best. Today, the situation is aggravated by the fact that newsrooms are no longer "old-boys networks," inclined to accept some of the military's more traditional ways as part of the journalistic landscape. The tendency of unprepared reporters, charging from crisis to crisis, unaware of the issues at stake or of how the military functions, is to frame complex matters in simplistic ways. Frontline reporting will be mostly by twenty something reporters who are neither bound by the traditional parameters of restraint exhibited by elder journalists of yore, nor can they afford to miss the deadlines. With enormous pressures, their attention span will be short. Therefore, if one cannot quickly and credibly put across one's viewpoint, one ends up losing half the battle even before it begins. We are experiencing the advent of parachute journalism—the practice of dropping into a trouble spot whoever happens to be in the newsroom with directions to provide an immediate story regardless of his or her background or experience. The advent of soundbite journalism, 30-second news stories and two column

newspaper stories also contributes to the lack of context and background of news reporting.

The recent application of military Subject Matter Experts (SMEs) has added a new dimension. The media uses retired military officers as SMEs to comment on, or assess and interpret, military information. These pundits often surmise what they think the armed forces' course of action for an operation will be, how the Indian armed forces might react to a situation, and criticise what they perceive to be flaws in current courses of action. In essence, this gives the public and our enemy a look inside the military mind of our armed forces. To their credit, all the SMEs on Indian TV have given the view of the armed forces as retired experts, objectively and in an appropriate manner. However, the risk is always there, that when on live feed, answering some critical question, one may inadvertently reveal some information which may be of some intelligence value to the enemy.

Today, commanders at all levels can count on operating "24/7" on a global stage before a live camera that never blinks. Politicians, bureaucrats and military leaders cannot wish away the media. And yet, enormous benefits can accrue to the military if it learns to use media as a force multiplier. The military must do all it can to engage, educate and ultimately influence the media to ensure that the media reports the story in the proper context. A single image can convey a lot. One picture of Sqn Ldr Ahuja's three-year-old son saluting his father's dead body or of Mrs Kalia saluting her husband's dead body with tremendous stoic demeanour moved the entire nation during the Kargil operations.

NEW MEDIA

Journalists..."streamed" or broadcast their reports...as they covered the movement of troops and the rocketing of villages....Such information was [once] the stuff of military intelligence....Now it has become the stuff of everyday journalism. The camera and the computer have become weapons of war.

—Marvin Kalb, Harvard University, on the Israeli-Hezbollah War of 2006

We are in the era of E-mail, Blogs, Blackberries, Instant Messaging, Digital Cameras, Internet, Cell Phones, Hand-Held Video Cameras, Talk Radio, 24 Hours News Broadcasts and Satellite Television. Traditional media outlets leverage new and social media, taking advantage of the web 2.0 workspace. Journalists can file directly from the field, anywhere on the globe, using cell phones, the Internet and remote-area network data systems transmitting compressed video signals. Satellite, microwave and fibre-optics systems are becoming miniaturised and

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increasingly mobile. Reporters have access to commercial satellite images that can reveal such things as troop deployments. Anyone can access maps. google.com on the Internet and see the type of maps/images that are available free online. The capability of the news media to photograph a battle area during times of war and thereby reveal the location of one's own ground units, ships and air bases could be detrimental to national security. The advances in technology cut both ways. Photographs have always been posed, cropped, staged and altered but digitisation makes manipulation much easier. Satellite imagery can be easily modified. Video image scan also be modified. Manufactured videos and misleading stories can be posted on the Internet. Reuters admitted that the photograph of a bombed Beirut with dark smoke rings rising that was shown during the Lebanon War was doctored.

Major newspapers or TV channels oversee dozens of internal blogs, many of which are moderated by selected editors who previously wrote exclusively for the printed version. News organisations actively engage their audiences through RSS feeds, blogs and online reporting features. CNN regularly uses YouTube videos and blogs as a primary sources of information. Like blogs, YouTube can empower individuals to achieve strategic political and military effects. Thus, the use of Improvised Explosive Devices (IEDs) by insurgents shifts from a military tactical weapon to a strategic information weapon when the IED detonator is accompanied by a videographer. The Israeli-Hezbollah

War of 2006 provides recent, glaring evidence of how the current information environment has impacted the way warfare is conducted today.

Three of the top five most visited sites in use today are social networking and video sharing sites including Facebook, Myspace and YouTube. There is a traffic jam of conversations facilitated by e-mail, Facebook, Myspace, YouTube, Flicks, Digg, Wikipedia, LinkedIn, Twitter and other social networking tools that facilitate discussion, debate and exchange of ideas on a global scale. The popularity of new web tools and services is remarkable. MySpace established in 2003, had 80 million members and hosted six million web pages within three years. By 2008, the number of messages transmitted on Facebook exceeded those sent by e-mail. More and more social networking applications are being developed for cell phones. Already, half the world's population has access to a cellular phone. One can only ignore these issues while handling the media at own peril.

During the 2008 terrorist attacks in Mumbai, people on the scene sent Twitter updates (limited to 140 characters). We can see how Twitter is changing the complete gamut of the Iranian Presidential election issue. The Internet has not penetrated large areas of the world, specially in the poor areas of underdeveloped countries. Cell phones, however, are increasingly available worldwide and can have a potentially potent capability to affect national security and military issues. Cell phones currently contain the technology to text, provide News, Video, Sound, Voice, Radio and Internet. Fifty-nine percent of mobile phones are in the developing world. There are over 450 million users in China, whereas India has about 200 million cell phone users. However, the percentage growth of the mobile market is 97 percent for India and the corresponding figure for China is 17 percent.

USE OF NEW MEDIA IN RECENT CONFLICTS

Superiority in the physical environment is of little value unless it can be translated into an advantage in the information environment.

-- Professor Sir Lawrence Freedman,
The Transformation of Strategic Affairs

Lebanon. During the 33-day war in Lebanon, Hezbollah demonstrated a refined capability to leverage new media to create positive informational effects. New media such as digital photography, videos, cellular networks and the Internet were used by all the parties: the Press, Israeli and Lebanese civilians, Israel Defence Forces (IDF) and Hezbollah. In this conflict, both Hezbollah and the IDF sought to shape the information environment, and to counter each other's messaging capabilities and content through defensive and offensive information initiatives. The IDF's "countering" campaign was largely offensive and kinetic, seeking to physically destroy Hezbollah's capacity to communicate. By contrast, Hezbollah's strategy was more "defensive," seeking to limit the IDF's ability to use Hezbollah's new media capabilities against itself. Maj. Avital Leibovich, the head of the IDF's foreign Press branch on the digital media campaign said, "The blogosphere and new media are another war zone, We have to be relevant there."

Gaza. In the recent Gaza conflict, the IDF has even joined the blogging revolution, with IDF spokesperson.com, and the official IDF site has launched its own section devoted to "Operation Cast Lead" complete with a banner graphic and photo and video updates from the combat zone. But it was the decision by Israel's New York Consulate to conduct a Press conference through Twitter that indicated just how far Israel would go in its efforts to shape the information environment.

Hackers on the other side of the conflict have had success, too, taking down the noted Israeli commentary site DEBKAfile along with some other targets. Hamas, which runs the government in Gaza, runs a smaller scale effort to get its message out, offering its website in eight different languages. The English version is located in the UK and features plenty of pictures and news accounts about "Jewish Nazism," "Zionist disinformation," and "the Israeli holocaust in Gaza.". Hamas backers late last year launched their own YouTube clone, AqsaTube, which featured weapons training videos, among other material; Al-Aqsa TV (which denied any relation to the AqsaTube site), the main TV station in Gaza, was apparently bombed by Israel after Israeli operatives had broke into Al-Aqsa transmissions

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regularly with messages of their own. It's a high-tech communications war being fought by both sides, though the electronic "war" is largely about shaping public perception instead of doing direct damage to the other side.

AfPak. With overwhelming firepower, Western armies rarely lose in combat to the Taliban fighters in Afghanistan. But in the communications battle, the militants appear to hold the edge. The gap has grown especially wide in the Afghan war zone. The Taliban leadership began using the media as a promotion tool during the 1990s. Taliban warlords renovated printing presses; launched new publications in Dari, Pashto, Arabic and English; maintained Voice of Sharia, a radio station, for dissemination of Taliban ideas and statements. Using FM transmitters, the Internet and threatening notes known as "night letters", the Taliban, operating from the border region of Pakistan and Afghanistan have proved effective at either cowing down citizens or winning them over to their message of *jehad*. By early 2009, Afghan and Pakistan Taliban factions were operating hundreds of radio programmes, distributing audio cassettes and delivering night letters to instill fear and obedience among their targeted populations. Media outreach has been especially dominant in Pakistan's Swat Valley, where dozens of stations broadcast nightly dictates on "un-Islamic" activities. Maulana Qazi Fazlullah, nicknamed "Radio Mullah," is widely seen as being among the most effective users of radio transmission; Pakistanis listen to his daily dictates if not out of interest, then out of dread. "Nobody likes it, but everybody is afraid because he summons the people and he lets them know that they are targets," one Pakistani told the BBC in February 2009.

Council on Foreign Relations (CFR) Senior Fellow Stephen Biddle says the media is part of the Taliban's broader operational fabric and militants often plan attacks for the biggest public relations punch (Al Qaeda also uses the tactic in Iraq). For instance, if the Taliban leadership wants to convey a

message that the Afghan government is unable to protect the population, Taliban commanders might plan an ambush, arrange for the attack to be photographed, and distribute the footage online, via cell phone videos, or to international media outlets. "The whole purpose of the military activity," Biddle says, is "to create video." Michael Devas, a former US Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defence, said that in Afghanistan, US forces carry out an operation "and within 26 minutes – we have timed it – the Taliban comes out with its version of what took place in the operation, which immediately finds its way on the tickers in the BBC at the bottom of the screen". The Taliban has been extremely proficient at propaganda and the USA must run now to catch up. US special representative Richard Holbrooke told journalists in March 2009 that "the information issue, sometimes called psychological operations or strategic communication" has become a "major, major gap to be filled" before US-led forces can regain the upper hand. As part of its new strategy for the Afghan War, the White House has called for an overhaul of "strategic communications" in Afghanistan "to improve the image of the United States and its allies" and "to counter the propaganda that is key to the enemy's terror campaign."

Training. The new media has revolutionised the lessons learned process. Once upon a time, platoon leaders would submit lessons learned to CALL(Centre of Army Lessons Learned) or the War Colleges and wait for the vertical structure to process those lessons. Today, tactical leaders trade and debate Tactics, Techniques and Procedures (TTP) on platoonleader.org or companycommand.com or in Small Wars Journal blog site. That's the good news. The bad news is that the enemy's lessons learned process is also now horizontal and powered by the Internet. What effect all this has on insurgent and terror groups is as fascinating a question as how this will affect our own military institutions. Lieutenant General William B. Caldwell, IV, Commanding General of the *Combined Arms Centre* has made it a requirement for students of the Command and General Staff College to blog. Given his experience in Iraq, he feels strongly that the next generation of military leaders needs to be comfortable in this space.

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Whatever the full implications might be, the military must embrace the new media; there is really no choice. Its power and dynamism dictate that the military should accord it the attention and focus it deserves. Even a brief survey of the new media's nature and impact leaves military leaders with the following points worthy of consideration:

- The new media has the capacity to be nearly ubiquitous. With only a few notable exceptions (e.g. Chechnya and Western China), there is little escape from its span and grip.

- Like the old media, the new media can also be enlisted to serve specific masters, though perhaps with greater difficulty.

- Properly understood, the new media can be a source of great power and influence.

- The new media holds a tremendous upside for education and for broadcasting the military's message.

- The new media forces us to modify habits and to think consciously about the practical and constitutional obligations inherent in becoming our own version of gatekeepers and agenda-setters.

- The new media is affecting modern conflict in significant ways not yet fully understood.

MILITARY VS MEDIA

The Military View? *Four hostile newspapers are more to be feared than a thousand bayonets.*

— Napoleon

The Media View? *War is a drug.......it is peddled by myth makers, historians, war correspondents, filmmakers, novelists and the state......*

— Chris Hedges (*War is a Force That Gives Us Meaning*)

A Clash of Cultures

The Military Respects	The Media Respects
Authority and Order	No authority
Tradition and Hierarchy	Bad news
Cooperation and teamwork	Competition
Specialisation	Generalisation
Institutions and Country	Individualism and Human Interest
Loyalty and Duty	Dog eat dog
Honour and Courage	Dog eat cat
If the military makes a mistake – people die	If the media makes a mistake – publish a correction

Despite these key differences, the military and the Press do share certain commonalities. Both aspire to a high level of professionalism and both focus on serving the public, albeit in very different ways. The military exists to defend and protect the country and its territories, while the media exists to keep the public informed; both roles are considered critical to a healthy democracy. The newsman and the military officer consider many of the same qualities to be important in their respective professions: initiative, responsibility, professionalism, dedication, efficiency, teamwork, delegation of authority, self-discipline, forward planning and flexibility. Both professions are highly structured and unique and rely on teamwork to get the job done. The requirement to make decisions under the pressure of time, often frustrated by inadequate information, is shared by the military and the news media. Both are probably more time oriented than most other professions and this dictates the way they do business.

INTELLIGENCE AND OPERATIONAL SECURITY

Commercial reconnaissance satellite will make it almost impossible for combatants to hide from the media, and with all sides watching the video screen, instant broadcasts from the battle zone threaten to alter the actual dynamics and strategies in war.

--- Alvin and Heidi Toffler

The media has become an important source of intelligence. In fact, it could become the sole source available, capable of providing real-time input for a whole set of operational considerations.

Valuable intelligence information is available in open source media. If we take advantage of this fact, so does the enemy. All information has a time value associated with it. If information is not received and processed before this time, it is of no value to the military. Commanders must assess the risk posed by the media with respect to operational security versus the benefit it provides in order to determine the level of media access. Commanders must then mitigate the risk caused by modern media coverage of the conflict while simultaneously maintaining public support. This is a complex and difficult task, but risk management has to be carried out.

Military operations rooms today, equipped with TV screens, provide operational and tactical intelligence even before the traditional intelligence channels reports come in. The media has become an important source of intelligence. In fact, it could become the sole source available, capable of providing real-time input for a whole set of operational considerations like: deployment, equipment, weapon systems, training, morale, will to fight, combat readiness, assessment of manoeuvre effectiveness and impact of fire support. At less than five-metre resolution, troop formations and aircraft placement will be distinctly visible on commercial TV screens. Troop movement will be monitored by adversaries, dispassionate observers and military analysts. The large flanking movements planned under strict secrecy, similar to what occurred in the Gulf War, would be exposed to viewers around the world.

The most viable solution to assure operational security will include the practice of security at the source, a clear set of ground rules accepted and understood by the media, and honest interaction between the military and the media covering the operation. Military experts predict that the time might come when the military commanders will seek the media's forecast as a planning factor to serve future operations.

Operational Security (OPSEC) and the New Media. The recent Lebanon War reveals some of the OPSEC challenges that are inherent to the contemporary operating environment. On the one hand, there is the challenge of OPSEC for those modern military forces that are drawn from "communication" societies, meaning those awash with instant and readily available communication means, and where the culture of 24/7 connectivity has become a socially accepted norm and expectation and the recognition that the soldier no longer has the ability to control all aspects of OPSEC as in the past. There is the seeming dichotomy between maintaining OPSEC within military units and telling the proactive and positive stories about military operations quickly, accurately and credibly. The new media has enabled individuals with strategic information capabilities such that controlling information is well outside the ability of military commanders. Contractors, Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs), and local community members (among others) with cell phones can report real-time information on military operations immediately to any number of sources. It has become critical to consider OPSEC in the planning process in order to mitigate the risk posed by the ubiquity of the new media. People appear to have trouble distinguishing between the private and public domains (reference postings to MySpace or Facebook social networks) . A balance must be struck between OPSEC requirements and the use of the new media to tell the good news stories. There is a requirement of a balance by proffering the four "E's":

> There should be little doubt that the media can influence military operations or at least the political leadership's decisions regarding military operations.

- Encourage soldiers to tell their story.
- Educate them on the ramifications of messages and the use of the new media.
- Empower them by underwriting honest mistakes.
- Equip them with the proper regulations and policy.

MEDIA AS FORCE MULTIPLIER

Power of the Media. There should be little doubt that the media can influence military operations or at least the political leadership's decisions regarding military operations. Who can forget how the media made a spectacle of showing 50-60 families of the passengers of the hijacked IA flight IC- 814 on the TV time and again. It created undue pressure on the government to look after the interests of these families vis-à-vis the national interests.

The information war is not confined to the military's command, control and intelligence systems. This war is also waged in the public domain, in news reports that are presented on television, radio and in print. National will, the foundation of any nation's power, is directly and critically influenced by the manner in which public information is presented. Thus, it is in the interest of the government, including the military, to possess strategies to effectively manage public information, whilst not infringing on the media's imperative for independent reporting.

Writing after the withdrawal of most Coalition forces from Fallujah in Iraq in favour of indigenous Iraqi units, Ralph Peters offered this assessment of the power of the media in determining military outcomes: "The [US] Marines in Fallujah weren't beaten by the terrorists and insurgents, who were being eliminated effectively and accurately. They were beaten by al-Jazeera. . . . The media [are] often referred to off-handedly as a strategic factor. But we still don't fully appreciate [their] fatal power. . . . In Fallujah, we allowed a bonanza of hundreds of terrorists and insurgents to escape us—despite promising that we would bring them to justice. We stopped because we were worried about what already hostile populations might think of us. The global media disrupted the US and Coalition chains of command. . . . We could have won militarily. Instead, we surrendered politically and called it a success. Our enemies won the information war. We literally didn't know what hit us."

The Media as a Multiplier Effect in Lebanon. The media as a force multiplier was effectively used by Hezbollah in the recent Israel-Lebanon conflict. By showcasing the damage in Lebanon and portraying the Israeli attacks against civilians as inhumane, Hezbollah was able to generate sympathy

for its actions among the Lebanese domestic audience and also internationally. Hezbollah understood, as Al Qaeda's number two leader has observed, that "more than half of the Islamists' battle is taking place in the battlefield of the media." By portraying the conflict as a pan-Islamic fight against Israel, Hezbollah was able to galvanise support from the Shia Iranians and Sunni Syrians.

Distinction Between Media Reaction and Public Opinion. There is an important distinction between media reaction and public opinion. Concern over public opinion is legitimate because the armed forces are responsible to the people. However, concern over media reaction is questionable. We do not have to surrender public opinion to the influence of the media. While we must acknowledge the media's potential influence, the military must guard against letting excessive concern over public reaction and media coverage of an event drive our actions. If committing troops to a troubled region is in the country's best interests but counter to public opinion or if a commander's decision to court-martial a soldier is necessary for good order and discipline but certain to draw public criticism, the army cannot let such concerns stand in the way of doing what is right and necessary. The armed forces must strike a balance between the past practice of ignoring the media and the growing tendency to be consumed by it.

Force Multiplier. The phrase "force multiplier" is used in military terminology as equivalent to something that adds synergy; an overall contributor to the effort where the sum of the parts is more than the whole. A force multiplier enhances the total effect of constituents. Examples are the Airborne Warning and Control System (AWACS) and Command Information Decision Support System (CIDSS). Due to media coverage, the need to perform under constant media glare makes matters more stressful for any commander. Some amount of stress can act as a catalyst for greater performance of commanders on the battlefield and, thus, act as a force multiplier. In the context of information

warfare, the media can be viewed as a veritable "force multiplier" with as much of a potential for altering the course war as any military force multiplier with a more tangible, more visible material existence.

Enormous benefits can accrue to the military (thereby the nation) if we learn to use the media as a force multiplier, it Using the media is an operational function and as a force multiplier provides a very effective and near instantaneous communications method not only to report on what the armed forces are doing but also as a propaganda catalyst to create uncertainty in the mind of the enemy. Leaders must be proactive and innovative in dealing with the media. The media coverage not only develops public awareness and the support of military units, it has the side benefit of enhancing their morale by informing their families and friends of the activities of the troops. If used prudently, the media is indeed a force multiplier as it builds public opinion. The media coverage of the Kargil operations is a shining example of how public opinion was formed and the entire nation rose to the challenge.

However, the media is extremely sensitive to the issue of media management and being used as a force multiplier. Mr Shekhar Gupta, editor in chief of The Indian Express group of newspapers, in an ARTRAC seminar on Media and National Security held at the Indian Institute of Mass Communication, New Delhi, on September 27-28, 2000, stated, "Please do not treat the media as a force multiplier. The media is not a part of the armed forces. Never use the term media management. It is self-defeating as culturally and genetically, the media is unmanageable."

MEDIA DOCTRINE

Once you have all the forces moving and events have been taken care of by the commanders ---- turn your attention to television because you can win or lose the war if you do not handle the story right.

— Gen Collin Powell

In our armed forces, we have neither a joint doctrine on the media nor does any of the three Services have one. There is an urgent need to issue directions

from the Ministry of Defence on interaction with the media. We have the archaic Official Secrets Act 1923 and Special Army Order 3/S2001/MI on Security of Service Information Communication to the Press and Publication by Army Personnel/Organisations. In the Western countries, media operations have been clubbed under Public Affairs(PA). On the same lines, the Additional Directorate General of Public Information (ADGPI) has been created at Army Headquarters.

PA and IO have significantly different and occasionally contradictory doctrines and policies concerning misinformation, information and deception.

British Joint Warfare Publication 0-01.1 defines media Operations as, "That line of activity developed to ensure timely, accurate and effective provision of Public Relations (PR) policy within the operational environment, whilst maintaining Operational Security. Media Ops are not a subordinate subset of Info Ops but are closely related activity. Media Ops and Info Ops staff must have clear visibility of each other's plans and operations to generate synergy. However, they must be seen to be separate and distinct, to avoid giving the false impression that the media are being manipulated, deceived or used for misinformation purposes."

According to US Joint Publication 3-13 Information Operations (IO), February 13, 2006, there are three military functions, Public Affairs (PA), Civil Military Operations (CMO), and Defence Support to Public Diplomacy, specified as related capabilities for Information Operations (IO). PA should not be considered an IO discipline or an IO Psy Ops tool. PA activities will not be used as a military deception capability or to provide disinformation to internal or external audiences.

Public Affairs (PA) is a command function and responsibility. The commander can communicate through a command spokesperson, but the success or failure of that spokesperson and the commander's public affairs programme hinges on his or her support and direct involvement. No matter how good the Public Affairs Officer (PAO) is, he can never fully substitute for the commander in either the public's or the soldier's eyes.

Dichotomy. PA and IO have significantly different and occasionally contradictory doctrine and policies concerning misinformation, information and deception. Current Western IW doctrine permits offensive action, deception and psychological operations undertaken to deny, degrade, destroy or deceive the enemy. There is a debate between the PA, IO, and Psy Ops communities about how to create a synergy that leverages the effects of all three into a coordinated, synchronised, comprehensive communications effort. To do so, they had to answer three questions: what, if any, role remains for PA? Where should PA fall within the organisation? How can PA be made more effective? In theory, the idea of merging PA, IO, and Psy Ops appears to make sense. However, in practice, the goals of these three functions are quite different. PA is charged with informing the public with factual, truthful information, while IO and Psy Ops seek to influence their audiences to change perceptions or behaviour. The challenge is to coordinate PA, IO, and Psy Ops functions so that each maintains its own integrity while maintaining credibility with the media. A problem arises, however, when PA and IO are aligned too closely. The basis of information used for IO purposes might be truthful, but it might also be manipulated to achieve an outcome. And, if the altered information cannot be substantiated with verifiable facts, credibility comes into question.

Doctrinally, IO and Psy Ops functions have been aligned with operations within a headquarters. PA has always been an independent special staff section that reports directly to the commander. PA is the voice of the commander and a conduit of information between the command and internal (command information) and external audiences, including but not limited to the media. The function of PA is to provide factual, timely information, not to affect public opinion by leading grassroots efforts or engaging in lobbying. PA does not exist to create news or overtly influence public opinion; it exists to provide factual information so that its audience can make informed opinions. Since the media will be the observer of some IW events, the victim of others and a knowing or unknowing agent in still others, the management of media impact should be included as one phase in the IO planning process. To avoid

a crisis of credibility and to maintain the command's integrity, the Public Affairs Officers (PAO) should always report directly to the commander and be free from outside influence. Rather than create new structures to combine PAO, IO, and Psy Ops, it is best to adhere to established, proven doctrine. While the PAO maintains integrity by reporting directly to the commander, IO and Psy Ops should remain in the realm of the operations.

Deception. As the British Chief of the Defence Staff noted during the Falklands War, "I do not see it as deceiving the Press or the public; I see it as deceiving the enemy. What I'm trying to do is win. Anything I can do to help me win is fair as far as I'm concerned."

Manipulation and deception are the tools of the IW trade. Public affairs officers are directed to attempt no deception yet they must remain involved in the overall IW campaign plan and coordination effort which expressly supports deception. It is significant that the 'right to lie' is not allowed under current public affairs doctrine, while it is left ambiguous for information operations. Truth is, of course, an abstract and relative notion — so-called 'facts' are often only a slice of the whole picture and can be subject to a variety of interpretations. Who will decide and implement the subtle deception operation like what Yudhistir told Guru Dronacharya in the battlefield of Kurukshetra at the behest of Lord Krishna, *Aswathama hathahat, narova kunjavora*?

Psy Ops. Indian Army doctrine says, "Psychological warfare is achieved through mass media such as newspapers, radio and television broadcasts and distribution of leaflets. The prevailing state of information technology allows effective psychological warfare to be conducted in a very subtle manner." Psychological operations are planned to convey selected information and indicators to foreign governments, organisations, groups and individuals in order to influence their emotions, motives, objective reasoning, and behaviour. If we are not using the media, how are we conducting psychological operations? By integrating PA with Psy Ops and using the same delivery means, the media, we muddy the information waters. While PA and Psy Ops principles may be conflicting, to some leaders, effects are all that matter. This view is supported

The military needs to be proud of its values and prepared to underwrite the risk that it will expose too much in the service of transparency; this risk is counter-balanced with an implicit trust that its values and the truth will eventually prevail.

by Brigadier General Mark Kimmitt, former Deputy Director of plans for CJTF Iraq. He says "Are we trying to inform? Yes. Do we offer perspective? Yes. Do we offer military judgment? Yes. Must we tell the truth to stay credible? Yes. Is there a battlefield value in deceiving the enemy? Yes. Do we intentionally deceive the American people? No. There is a gray area. Tactical and operational deception is proper and legal on the battlefield….in a worldwide media environment how do you prevent that deception from spilling out from the battlefield and inadvertently deceiving the American people?"

Bridging the IO-PA Firewall. Western doctrine forbids the use of PA as a military deception capability, or to provide disinformation to internal or external audiences. It specifically states that PA and Psy Ops activities must remain separate and distinct in the minds of the public and the media and in practice. To add to the confusion, the doctrine also states that PA should not be considered an IO discipline or an IO tool. PA activities are complementary to yet distinct from IO. We must find a way to bridge the doctrinal firewall separating IO and PA without violating the rules governing both. This firewall is essential to ensuring that Psy Ops, deception operations, EW and Computer Network Operations (CNO) do not migrate into PA and discredit the PA effort. PA should concentrate solely on the coordination and dissemination of factual information, without any interaction with IO or Psy Ops functions. IO/Psy Ops planners should carefully monitor what the media reports, and plan their efforts accordingly.

The military needs to be proud of its values and prepared to underwrite the risk that it will expose too much in the service of transparency; this risk is counter-balanced with an implicit trust that its values and the truth will eventually prevail. Truth and transparency are strengths and not hindrances. Successful relationships between the military and media are based on

credibility and trust that is built over time. Withholding or manipulating information or creating the impression that the command PA is unnecessarily withholding or manipulating information that should or could be provided to the media, reduces the command PA's credibility and operational capacity. Providing information is only effective in the end if the information is truthful and squares with the realities faced by its recipients. The challenge is getting the truth out first and in an appealing package, before the enemy does. Timing is critical. Furthermore, the current global media gravitate toward information that is packaged for ease of dissemination and consumption; the media will favour a timely, complete story.

Information is almost as powerful as bullets and bombs. Winning this war is as much about winning the trust and confidence of the people. Commanders must tailor IO to achieve desired effects with critical audiences and help ground commanders achieve success in tactical operations. However, they must take care not to use the news media to effect change in people. This is not the media's purpose; however, in today's global information market, there is a growing temptation to do just that. The important lesson here is that in attempting to win the information battle, the military must ensure it does not lose the strategic war. In trying to win people's trust and confidence, it must not lose the people—whether they are the ones it is trying to affect or whether they are the ones it must rely on for support.

MEDIA IN CI OPS

Counter-Insurgency Operations (CI Ops) by nature demand winning the information war rather than killing the militants. To conduct successful CI Ops, the army must win over the media. Perhaps of greatest importance is the local media because they tell the story to the local public. Some have described the media itself as a centre of gravity in these operations. The media have a vital role in societies directly and indirectly involved in counter-insurgency. In CI Ops, information is almost as powerful as bullets and bombs. Winning this war is as much about winning the trust and confidence of the people.

One cannot wage war under present conditions without the support of public opinion.

Terrorists have historically relied very heavily on organised media, including newspapers, periodicals, television and radio to communicate their motives and aims in what they hope to be positive ways. In order to secure favourable publicity, terrorist groups have frequently attempted to form good relationships with the Press that are often cultivated and nurtured over a period of years. Recently in Lalgarh of West Bengal, the Maoists used the TV media very skillfully. In insurgencies, by using the media selectively, terrorists are able not only to instill fear and insecurity amongst the people but also create doubts in the minds of the security forces about the efficacy of their CI Ops. This, in turn, makes the people and the military lose faith in the government.

Local Press. Vernacular media is more important than all other media since they are the opinion makers for the local people. We can only ignore them at our peril. The local/vernacular Press has always been the target of the militant groups. Facing the gun, there is little choice for them except to publish distorted and doctored stories to please their masters. Stringers controlled by militant outfits, put out colourful and contorted reports which are a travesty of the truth. Disinformation, false reports and rumours are floated by the militants and their agents to suit their designs. In Punjab, the local private media capitulated completely to the terrorist diktat, leaving the government media as the only source of information. The only private group which stood up to the terrorists was the Punjab Kesari Group. For this, the group paid a very high price in blood. Vernacular media in Kashmir Valley is totally partial, and do not think twice before publishing malicious reports against the Army, in particular, and the security forces and the nation in general. Quite a few are on the payroll of interested parties. This media is the mouthpiece of militant organisations and defiantly abuses the freedom of the Press. We not only allow them to print but offer them newsprint at subsidised rates and send in government advertisements for their survival. It is in the arena of CI Ops that poor media relations have really hurt the armed forces, the government and the country at large. The media has to be addressed at the national, state and local levels in a synergy. One wonders

what the effect would be on the CI Ops if the soldiers sacrificing their lives in Kashmir got the same coverage as those who fought in Kargil.

MEDIA IN PEACE-TIME

It appears we have appointed our worst generals to command forces, and our most gifted and brilliant to edit newspapers! In fact, I discovered by reading newspapers that these editors/geniuses plainly saw all my strategic defects from the start, yet failed to inform me until it was too late. Accordingly, I'm readily willing to yield my command to these obviously superior intellects, and I'll, in turn, do my best for the Cause by writing editorials—after the fact.

—Robert E. Lee, 1863

Military life demands strict discipline, absolute integrity, *esprit de corps*, selfless service, a formal rank structure, and physical and moral courage. The value of these is readily apparent during war. However, during peace-time, people outside the military often criticise these same attributes. The same media members who agree that different rules, principles, and expectations apply during combat are the first to question them during peace-time. Apparently, the media and the public think the Services should do things differently during combat than during peace-time. The problem is a failure to understand the age-old maxim that warriors must train and live as they will fight. War has been described as hell. Unfortunately, most of these principles and values are not natural attributes. They are skills and beliefs that require inculcation through intense training. They cannot be turned on and off or bought on the Internet. Until the media understands why the military requires certain standards and behaviour, they will continue to write stories that misinterpret, misconstrue or miss the point entirely.

CRITICAL ISSUES

One cannot wage war under present conditions without the support of public opinion, which is tremendously molded by the press and other forms of propaganda.

— Gen Douglas MacArthur

Media Briefing by Senior Officers. The Army officers' tendency to speak bluntly has caused trouble. Gen Rodrigues came under fire for quite innocuous remarks, which were completely taken out of context by the Press. This is why Gen V. P. Malik, in his first Press briefing on Kargil, cautiously remarked "I am not going into semantics. You are going to misquote me tomorrow." It is this apprehension of being misquoted, or being punished for occasional slip-ups, which percolates the armed forces, leading to mundane and dull briefings. The Army has landed into controversy because of its lack of aptitude, but in most of the cases, it cannot defend itself due to organisational and operational constraints. As a major general who taught the media course in the US Army War College said, "If we don't tell our side of the story, shame on us. Reporters are like alligators. You don't have to love them, you don't have to like them but you do have to feed them."

The military is still in a zero-defect mentality where there is no reward for risk takers. After all, what are the gains to engaging the media when engaging the media can certainly have an immediate detrimental effect on one's career? Today's senior military leaders need to invest time and resources in transforming this media-adverse culture. The military cannot continue to have senior leaders setting the example by shying away from the media as their way of conducting public affairs. Following of an age old saying *Jo Boley, Kunda Khole* (he who speaks has to take action) must be discouraged.

Understanding the Media. The military also needs to understand the factors that go into making news like media deadlines, competition, etc. We should know how the media functions, who does what kind of story, when you are disseminating information, whom are you talking to? Are you talking to an editor/chief of bureau/special correspondent/reporter? Editors write editorials or edit page articles. If we want something to appear in a newspaper we must call a correspondent and speak to him/her. If we call a person from the audiovisual media, we not only have to give him a story but also visuals to illustrate the story. Most importantly, the military needs to find the right balance between local and foreign media. Depending on the situation, one may be more important than the other.

Media Interaction with Junior Officers and Men. The Army, as always, does a magnificent job and the public should know it. Soldiers will invariably do the right things. Providing media access to them cements the bond between the society they come from and the military they support. Soldiers are ingenious and intelligent and their professionalism is obvious to anyone who comes in contact with them. However, there is a tendency in the media to quote them on operational or strategic issues. Officers and other ranks at a lower level will never be aware of the total perspective and, hence, their observations could convey a distorted version of the real, larger story. In such cases, the media would be better advised to restrict themselves to human interest stories and get the overall perspective from qualified persons at the appropriate headquarters.

Reporter vs Patriot, There is a sensitive issue of journalists being patriots first and reporters second. When it came to the very strong dilemma between the truth and the national interests, the examples of the British in Falklands and the Americans during the Gulf War may be kept in mind. There is a big difference between the right to do something and the right thing to do. The media understands the stark realities of war and follows Ernie Ply's observation, "You feel small in the presence of dead men, and you don't ask silly questions". In Kargil, the media rose to the occasion.

Present Media Organisation. Our present Public Relations (PR) organisation is archaic, multi-tiered, slow, and lacks synergy. It is perpetually in reactive mode, unable to meet media timelines and militant propaganda in CI Ops. There is no dedicated spokesperson at each formation headquarters level. Units operating in remote areas are unable to give out their version to the media in time. The present PR organisation needs complete reorganisation. The Kargil Review Committee Report states, "Defence Public Relations are routinely handled by the Ministry of Defence through regular Information Service cadres. This organisation is not equipped to handle media relations during war or proxy war. The briefing function during the Kargil crisis was taken over by a triad of senior military and civil spokesmen. Army Headquarters set up an Information and Psychological Warfare Cell under

There is a need to designate an official Army spokesman at the level of Command, Corps, Division and Independent Brigade Headquarters.

an officer of the rank of Major General with direct access to the Army Chief. This enabled the Army Headquarters both to monitor and disseminate information in a better calibrated manner than would have been the case otherwise."

RECOMMENDATIONS

Proactive Approach. We must have a proactive approach to leverage the media. There is a requirement of every stakeholder, be it Ministry of External Affairs or Ministry of Defence, Ministry of Information and Broadcasting or the armed forces, to remain in the same wavelength. Proper planning at the government level is essential to achieve synergy. The planning and operations should be coordinated at all levels. Devolution of the information dissemination system should be the key to the military's interaction with the media. At present, there is little interaction between the staff and the media at the Command, Corps and Division level. Any Press release which has to be issued is required to be cleared by successively higher authorities. Even at formation/unit level, one is not clear as to whose staff function it is to deal with the media—General Staff (GS) Branch or Adjutant's (A) Branch. Thus, when it comes to ceremonial occasions such as raising days, it is the A Branch which issues Press releases, and when it is an operational matter, it is the GS Branch. There is, therefore, a need to designate an official Army spokesman at the level of Command, Corps, Division and Independent Brigade Headquarters. These spokesmen will act as a single window agency for military-media interaction.

The commanding officers of units involved in CI Ops/ Aid to Civil Authorities should be allowed to interact with the media. In case of any untoward incidents during operations or otherwise, the Commanding Officers(COs) should be allowed to give out the factual data to local media so that the version of the insurgents is not the only one published. It is high time we trust our COs. After more than 20 years of service, a CO is competent

and responsible enough to deliver the goods. There will be a problem of openness. Subordinate officers at times will shoot off their mouth. Higher commanders have to take this in stride. The choice is simple: either to have a few spokespersons who talk out of turn or everyone keeps shut and the media reports without Army's version.

Develop New Public Affairs Measures of Effectiveness (MOE). The old ways of measuring public affairs success are no longer valid. It is simply not enough to know how many Press releases were sent or how many minutes of air time we obtain on a major TV network. Telling the story of our soldiers is still important; but, if it is to be an operational function, public affairs must be subject to other MOEs. Media activities should be judged not by rebuttals, but by how many stories the Army has been able to put in the media. The civic actions, the operations, the liaison done with various agencies of the government including Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs), etc should be highlighted regularly. Though difficult, the local and vernacular media have to be addressed continuously because we must remember that in CI Ops, it is the local people who comprise the centre of gravity. There is no harm in fixing a minimum number of PR campaigns that a formation headquarters must undertake per week or month. Suitable mid-course corrections can be made thereafter.

Increased Use of the Internet. The Internet is recommended to be used extensively. Not only is the Internet an effective way to communicate directly with domestic and international audiences, it offers a method to counter propaganda, influence enemy opinions and obtain intelligence. Using the Internet provides the armed forces with a powerful tool to convey information quickly and efficiently on the nature and scope of our mission. Civilian journalists use the Internet every day to monitor the competition. So should the military. We do have sites on the Internet. These should be professionally managed, regularly updated, provide images and Press releases or rebuttals or clarification on any issue. In the Internet age, when anyone with a computer and modem can become a war correspondent, methods must be developed for winning the public information campaign in both traditional

The media's right to a free Press conflicts with the military's concern for operational security. It is time for the military to accept the media as part of the battlefield of the 21ˢᵗ century. media and cyberspace. Unfortunately, the tactics, techniques and procedures for conducting a cyber public information campaign are yet to be developed.

Training. Implementation of the Kargil Review Committee recommendations should be monitored. It states, "Media should avail of the opportunity of upgraded war correspondents' course at the Army War College so that there is a cadre of trained war correspondents at any time. Simultaneously, media relations and the technique and implications of information war and perception management must form a distinct and important module at all levels of military training. It also must be recognised that the media has to be serviced at many levels— national, local and international."

We should encourage young journalists into theTerritorial Army to serve with battalions in active areas. Let them gain first-hand knowledge of counter-insurgency operations. While filing reports, they will be better equipped to project the military. Similarly, we should get officers attached during their study leave with the electronic and print media. This will bestow insight into the functioning as well as the compulsions of the media. As officers on study leave continue to draw their pay and perks, to accommodate them as part of on-the-job training should not pose a problem for either.

Dedicated Radio and TV Channels. The Kargil Review Committee recommendations on the establishment of dedicated radio and TV channels to entertain and inform our armed forces deployed all year round in very difficult and inhospitable terrain should be implemented.

CONCLUSION

Some of the most important combat of tomorrow will take place on the media battlefield.

— Alvin and Heidi Toffler

The media's right to a free Press conflicts with the military's concern for operational security. It is time for the military to accept the media as part of the battlefield of the 21st century and to understand and prepare for the media as it does for other battlefield elements.

Information management in real-time is the challenge of our age. We need to have a fresh look at our functioning in the information age. It is essential here to remember that whoever speaks the first word with credibility is always considered right and reactive responses can at best enable us to defend the issues but can seldom replace the proactive winning approach.

We must resolve some of the tricky issues now and not wait for a crisis to develop. Much as we wish to give the media the opportunity to report from the battlefield, the resources and security criteria may not allow us to send everybody. Whom do we choose? Do we go strictly by TRP ratings or return some favour to those who have been objective in defence reporting amongst NDTV, CNN IBN, TIMES TV, STAR, Headlines Today in English? The same dilemma will be there for the foreign media, Hindi, regional language TV, print media of English, Hindi, vernacular and regional languages. In future, do we follow pooled/embedded/accredited media in the battlefield?

The media resents the term "force multiplier". Is the media a "force multiplier"? It may not be, if it is considered as an available tool or resource to manage information. But the connotation changes if we achieve mutual understanding and help the media with information relevant to public interest. The media then gives us an opportunity to 'encash the cheque', and releases synergy due to its reach and penetration. It persuades the people to commit themselves to a cause for which the defence Services are employed.

The dilemma between public affairs or media operations as part of Psy Ops and deception operations needs to be resolved. Public affairs is responsible for informing the public with factual, truthful information, while IW, Psy Ops and deception operations seek to influence their audience to change their perceptions or behaviour, using the same media. The mishandling of information, whether intentional or accidental, could spell success or failure for the credibility of the PA effort as well as the entire mission.

To conclude, one is tempted to quote extensively from a speech given by Joe Galloway, senior writer, *US News & World Report* on October 22, 1996, at the Commandant's Lecture Series, Air War College, Maxwell AFB, Ala. Excerpts are given below.

I was asked to give you my reflections on the Military-Media Relationship. I will confess, right up front, that I am partial to the Infantry; always have been. Some might find that puzzling if not perverse; that a civilian reporter, given a choice, would choose the hardest and least glamorous part of any war as the part he wishes to cover. But there is method in that madness, and I would recommend it to my younger colleagues who may one day be called on to cover war. There, in the mud, is where war is most visible and easiest understood. There no one will lie to you; no one will try to put a spin on the truth. Those for whom death waits around the next bend or across the next rice paddy field have no time and little taste for the games that are played with such relish in the rear. No one ever lied to me within the sound of the guns.

I am here to argue for more openness, more contact, more freedom between your profession and mine. In this one instance, I believe, familiarity would breed not contempt but trust and respect.

Some of you seated here today—the best and brightest of our nation's defenders—are convinced that the Press is your enemy. In any similar gathering of reporters, there would, no doubt, be some who believe the same thing of you. This is a national tragedy—and one that each of us has an obligation and a duty to do everything we can to repair and heal. There is more than enough blame and fault to go around, but that is not the point. But there is still that underlying suspicion: Your peers tell you that I, and people like me, are YOUR enemy. My peers tell me that you, and people like you, are MY enemy. The correct answer to both groups is: Bullshit!

Some day, some of you in this room will wear stars and carry the heavy responsibility of high command. Inevitably, the day will come when you must lead your young Lieutenants and Captains into the horror that is war. When that day comes, or in the days before it comes, the phone will likely ring and some public affairs puke will be on the line asking you how many media pukes

you want to take with you.

When that day comes, the right answer is: yes sir, yes sir, I'll take three bags full, but send me the brightest and best ones you have. Then farm them out with your Lieutenants and Captains and let them go to war together. The experience of war will create bonds between them that cannot be broken; the young reporters will learn to love the soldiers and airmen just as you and your Lieutenants have learned; and in the end, 99 percent of the coverage that flows from this experience will be entirely positive.

I thank you and all those like you for sharing your world with me. You have shared the last two sips of water in your canteen on a hot jungle trail; you've shared the only cup of hot coffee in a hundred miles on a cold desert morning in the Euphrates Valley; and always you have shared what is in your hearts. Your world, your profession, has given me the best friends of my life and both the greatest happiness and greatest sorrow I have ever known.

I would leave you with these lines from Rudyard Kipling in which he tried to explain his relationship with the British Army. They explain something of what I feel:

I've eaten your bread and salt,

I've drunk your water and wine;

The deaths you've died I've watched beside,

And the lives that you've led were mine.

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