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Improving Tactical PSYOP Video Dissemination in Media-Austere Operating Environments

Arthur Tulák

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by Arthur Tulák

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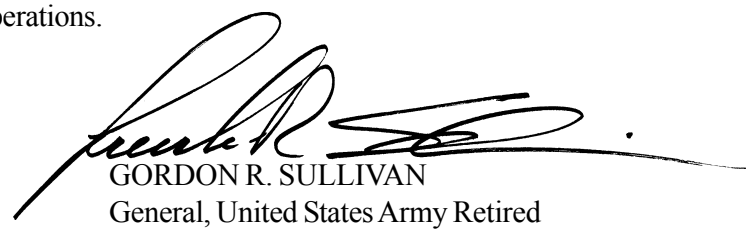
Foreword

To achieve the stated goals of the U.S. National Security Strategy, Army, joint and coalition operations around the globe increasingly require not only well-trained combatants and state-of-the art weapon systems but also effective means to win the "hearts and minds" of the local populations. As the Army prepares itself for the battlefields of the future, it must ensure that all the necessary tools are at hand.

Recent operations demonstrate the requirement for video psychological operations (PSYOP) in media-austere environments where the target audience lacks access to television because of poverty or insufficient supporting infrastructure. Media-austere operating environments also lack the indigenous TV programming necessary to attract the target audience. Accordingly, video PSYOP requires a supporting base of culturally appropriate video programming.

The author argues that PSYOP modernization efforts must include access to such supplemental programming while developing the technical means for tactical video dissemination. He cites operations in Afghanistan—a prototype media-austere operating environment—that illustrate the need for creating and delivering tailor-made video products to small audiences in remote villages, military bases and cities using tactical dissemination systems operated by PSYOP Soldiers. This also requires modern, versatile, tactical video dissemination means that can withstand field conditions and complement tactical operations.



GORDON R. SULLIVAN
General, United States Army Retired
President

January 2005

Improving Tactical PSYOP Video Dissemination in Media-Austere Operating Environments

Introduction

Recent psychological operations (PSYOP) in Afghanistan in support of Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF) have shown the significant challenges of reaching a target audience in media-austere operating environments. A media-austere operating environment is defined here as an environment where the means of broadcasting, namely television and radio, are severely degraded following military operations or have not yet developed into maturity, and where the target audience (TA) does not have access to the equipment (television or radio sets) necessary to receive the broadcast message. Successful video PSYOP in media-austere operating environments require modern and versatile tactical video dissemination that complements tactical operations and adheres to force-protection constraints to bring video products directly to the TA.

While the video medium is one of the most powerful means of communicating PSYOP messages, successful dissemination of PSYOP video has generally required an extant television network and a developed and ready television viewing audience. In media-rich environments, video PSYOP is typically broadcast to a TA already tuned in for normal programming. In a nonpermissive environment PSYOP programming can be delivered to the TA by either overpowering the normal signal or broadcasting on channels not in use. In either a semi-permissive or permissive environment, PSYOP can purchase or acquire airtime. In operating environments where such a network and viewing audience is not developed, tactical means for dissemination must fill the gap. PSYOP forces typically do not attempt to employ media not readily supported by the operating environment. Nevertheless, the supported commander may deem video to be the most effective means to reach an illiterate TA in a media-austere environment and may request such products to support his operations.

Effective broadcast dissemination of radio and television PSYOP in media-austere operating environments necessitates either the reconstruction of damaged broadcasting facilities or the employment of military radio and television broadcasting systems like the Special Operations Media System (SOMS-B for the latest "B" version), or the EC-130 Commando Solo aircraft. The reach of ground-based transmitters is limited by the effects of terrain and the number of transmitters that may be erected, protected, equipped and manned. The limitations on aerial transmitters are, primarily, broadcast range and flight time. However, video broadcast operations cannot reach a TA that does not have access to TV.

In broadcast radio PSYOP, it is generally practical to distribute radio receivers to the TA. While battery-operated portable FM radios can be obtained cheaply to overcome equipment

shortages, this is certainly not the case for television sets. Even if television sets could be distributed cheaply, the broadcast range of television signals is significantly less than that of radio. Because of the short range of TV signals, effective long-term broadcasting operations would require the installation of repeaters or additional broadcast facilities and crews to operate them. Whatever broadcast system is employed, portions of the TA will still be out of reach because they are either outside the range of the broadcast system or lack access to a receiver. These portions of the TA represent a "denied audience" for which PSYOP forces require other means to deliver video products.

In a media-austere environment, no indigenous programming draws the TA to the medium through which PSYOP messages are sent, nor can an existing broadcast infrastructure be co-opted. Instead, tailor-made video products must be delivered on-site to small audiences in remote villages, military bases and cities using tactical dissemination systems that should be operated by PSYOP soldiers. The absence of video programming in a media-austere environment also makes difficult PSYOP forces' ability to attract and keep the TA's attention for subsequent engagements. To draw the TA to the medium, PSYOP forces need supporting video programming that is appropriate to the TA. To employ video PSYOP in media-austere operating environments, U.S. Special Operations Command (USSOCOM) must acquire both special-purpose tactical video dissemination systems and supporting and supplemental video programming appropriate to the culture of the TA. Currently, the exploitation of video media in austere operating environments lacking a mature television infrastructure exceeds U.S. PSYOP capabilities.

The Anticipated Revolution in PSYOP

In the late 1990s, the PSYOP community was oriented to transforming PSYOP in both audiovisual and computer-network media. The National Defense University's Institute for Strategic Studies 1996 Strategic Assessment predicted that "cyberspace may become the battlespace of the information warrior" and laid out the new technological means available to PSYOP that were considered "unimaginable even in the mid-1980s."[1] The intersection of Information Age technology enabling the expansion and sophistication of networks with the rapid growth and reach of mass media was expected to have significant impact on the effectiveness of PSYOP.[2]

The U.S. PSYOP community was grappling with the challenge of operating in sophisticated media environments but employing a doctrine more suited to third-world primitive media environments primarily using print and radio. The technical aspects of the challenge are well documented in Major Stephen C. Larsen's 1999 Command and General Staff College master's thesis, "Conducting Psychological Operations in Sophisticated Media Environments."[3] Essentially, the new task was to successfully compete in media-saturated operating environments where the PSYOP message and product was one of several choices available to the TA. Savvy and sophisticated video PSYOP would be required to reach the TA via television in mature and sophisticated media-rich operating environments, such as the former Yugoslavia. In U.S. and NATO peace support and combat operations in Bosnia and Kosovo, PSYOP products had to overcome media competition from established programming and secure audience interest in an already saturated medium.

In October 1999 the Office of the Under Secretary of Defense for Acquisition, Technology and Logistics established the Defense Science Board (DSB) Task Force on the Creation and Dissemination of All Forms of Information in Support of Psychological Operations in Time of Military Conflict (hereinafter "DSB Task Force"). In its May 2000 report, the DSB Task Force found that in future operations U.S. video PSYOP will "need to compete against a very large menu of commercial TV channels."[4] The Task Force concluded that in the face of such competition, "it will become increasingly difficult for the PSYOP community to acquire 'mind-share' in its target audiences."[5] The general prediction in the late 1990s was that U.S. PSYOP probably would not operate in a media environment where it could be "the only show in town" due either to rules of engagement prohibiting jamming of the competition or to third country media broadcast bleed-over.[6]

The DSB Task Force focused intently on the anticipated revolution in PSYOP that major changes in telecommunications and media technology would make possible. Chapter 4 of the DSB Task Force report discussed at length the new means of transmitting or disseminating information that could be exploited for PSYOP messages but were beyond what were then the capabilities or policy restrictions of U.S. PSYOP. These new capabilities comprised the Internet (e.g., websites, e-mail, chatrooms, wireless messaging and real-time video and audio streams), cable TV, High-Definition TV broadcasting, digital audio broadcasting, satellite TV and radio, telephony (e.g., pagers, cellular telephones and wireless personal digital assistants, or PDAs), and crossover computer and telephony technology (e.g., computer telephony integration, which combines the database functions of computers with voice or facsimile transmission systems).[7] These new forms of pinpoint-delivery communications systems, particularly the Internet, could be precisely targeted and were expected to enable the joint warfighting concept of precision engagement in PSYOP, which would achieve "precise effects in cyberspace, as well as . . . directed psychological operations for greatest influence."[8]

The growth of computers played another role in facilitating a revolution in PSYOP by improving command, control and support of deployed PSYOP forces. Gary Whitley explored this aspect in his U.S. Army War College Strategy Research Project, "PSYOP Operations in the 21st Century." The report assessed the future of U.S. PSYOP and predicted that growth in computer media would make the Internet "the vehicle to enable a revolution in PSYOP."[9] The focus was on improving command, control and intelligence and providing product development support of forward-deployed PSYOP forces. The key enabler for improving PSYOP effectiveness was the "Reachback" concept, whereby forward-deployed forces could use secure communications networks to get product development, target analysis and assessment support from the 4th Psychological Operations Group (POG) at Fort Bragg, North Carolina. The concept of Reachback "is dependent upon an enormous amount of bandwidth through secure communications links," which the computing revolution was expected to deliver.[10] Currently, this command, control and product support revolution has been achieved largely in the PSYOP Distribution System (PDS) and the digital video dissemination system (DVDS), which provides point-to-point product exchange capabilities.[11]

The Bow Wave of the PSYOP Revolution: Peace Enforcement in the Balkans. In the Bosnian civil war, all of the warring factions usurped or heavily co-opted their indigenous television

networks and exploited the Western TV media in pursuit of their propaganda objectives.[12] Further, television transmitting and rebroadcasting stations were high-priority military targets, the seizure or loss of which meant winning or losing the propaganda wars.[13] Entering the conflict as part of the Implementation Force (IFOR) to enforce the Dayton Peace Accord, U.S. PSYOP forces were challenged with producing video PSYOP products that could compete with the civilian market.

During Operations Joint Endeavor, Joint Guard and Joint Forge, U.S. and allied forces operated in a mature media environment where video products were readily inserted into the existing television broadcast network for dissemination, tucked into the preexisting and continuing programs of local and regional content. By March 1997, IFOR and the following Stabilization Force (SFOR) had produced 51 television PSYOP video products for dissemination via local TV stations throughout the theater of operations.[14] During Joint Endeavor the 1st Infantry Division established the capability for live TV interviews to send command messages to the TA.[15] To compete effectively with civilian-produced video, U.S. PSYOP forces even hired civilian videographers and employed state-of-the-art video equipment.[16]

During Operation Allied Force in Kosovo, U.S. and NATO forces were surprised by the Internet campaign Serbia waged. The government of Serbian president Slobodon Milosevic employed hundreds of pro-Serb websites that disseminated Serbian propaganda effectively both regionally and internationally.[17] The Serbian regime demonstrated its flexibility in exploiting the new media, and did so faster than NATO forces could respond with counterpropaganda. The result was that the Serbs maintained the initiative in the information realm. Major Angela Lungu, writing on the role of the Internet in PSYOP, observed that the World Wide Web permits enemies to act asymmetrically in the information realm and, with minimal investment, achieve strategic results in influencing public opinion and inciting regional hostility against the United States.[18]

The Milosevic regime employed the Internet to globally post "propaganda depicting Serb victims, bombings in violation of international law, and NATO [in the role of] aggressors."[19] In the process, the Serbs accomplished strategic PSYOP objectives at almost no cost. While Serb television and radio had been shut down by the NATO air campaign, the Serbs still got their messages to the international media, which reinforced the spread of Internet propaganda by reporting the Serbs' claims. The Serb use of the Internet to compete on a regional and strategic level demonstrates that a media-rich operating environment will demand a high level of flexibility and versatility from friendly information operations, to include PSYOP.

Employing video PSYOP to reach the Serbs and ethnic Albanians in Serbian Kosovo, NATO forces developed a 60- to 90-minute program entitled "Allied Voice Radio and Television," which was "a mix of news, music and features related to the conflict. Video and audio programs focused on the atrocities being committed in Kosovo."[20] The video programs targeted both sides: Serbian military personnel and civilians, and ethnic Albanians in Kosovo and refugee camps. After shutting down Serbian television in a counterpropaganda mode, NATO continued to broadcast this program for weeks after the end of the air campaign in June 1999 because it was the only way to reach the TAs. While the PSYOP operating environment in the Balkans seemed to point the way to the future, many argued that the future operating environment would likely be "low-tech" and thus require a different set of delivery means and methods.[21]

Video PSYOP

According to the 1994 version of Field Manual 33-1-1, *Psychological Operation*s, the term "video" refers to "the technical process of producing magnetic tapes that have both visual and sound effects."[22] Throughout this paper, the term "video PSYOP" includes the production and dissemination of all PSYOP products prepared on videocassettes, Digital Video Disc (DVD) or video compact-disc (VCD) intended to be viewed on a television screen, computer monitor or projector. The term "television" in conjunction with video PSYOP likewise includes all video imagery displayed on television sets, whether by broadcast or hard-copy video products. As the U.S. Army field manual says,

> Television is a proven means of persuasion worldwide and, therefore, a vital asset in PSYOP dissemination. TV appeals to a number of senses, making it the closest medium to face-to-face communication.[23]

Video media provide PSYOP forces "a powerful means of persuasion . . . [that] can elicit a high degree of recall."[24] PSYOP products properly prepared and disseminated in the video media are vivid and not perceived as propaganda: research has demonstrated that most audiences perceive the products as factual and accurate.[25] Modern U.S. video PSYOP was first employed in the Vietnam War at the operational level over a four-station network under the control of the Joint U.S. Public Affairs Office.[26] Current tactics, techniques and procedures (TTPs) for showing video PSYOP products at the tactical level have their genesis in the techniques used to show PSYOP film products that, prior to the advent of video PSYOP in the 1970s, were the only effective medium that could reproduce events with movement.[27] Capabilities for tactical dissemination of video PSYOP improved dramatically with the advent of the video recorder and videocassette player, which allowed both pinpoint distribution and simultaneous broadcasting from multiple transmitter sites.

Where the TA is beyond the range of the broadcast signal, lacks access to television sets or has no electrical power, it may be considered a "denied audience." Most discussions of denied audiences focus on limitations imposed by geographic distance, enemy threats or physical access to the TA.[28] However, the lack of infrastructure, limitations in broadcasting capabilities or the absence of receivers also can effectively keep the TA from receiving the message via broadcast means. Under these conditions, PSYOP doctrine suggests that Tactical PSYOP Teams (TPTs) bring the video product to the TA in a tactical mode via point dissemination.

Television, flexible and immediate, can be broadcast live and present events such as news, sports and entertainment or use prerecorded programs or videotape. The advent of the videocassette recorder and home video camera has made it possible to create and show a presentation on television without using outside production facilities.[29]

In operating environments where television sets are rare or unevenly distributed or where electricity is unavailable or unreliable, doctrine suggests that television receivers be set up in public places to receive the broadcast signal.[30] A field-proven TTP is to employ prerecorded video presentations on remote television sets independent of broadcasting facilities.[31] An advantage of PSYOP video products is that they "can be studied in private or in small groups and can

be kept secret," which is especially important in situations where factional violence is prevalent.[32] During OEF, the 82d Airborne Division employed generator-powered, VHS cassette-capable television sets to show video products to small audiences.

One demonstration of the power of low-tech distribution of PSYOP to denied audiences is the model employed by Iran's Ayatollah Khomeini, who, while in exile, effectively distributed his messages to TAs in Iran via audiocassette tapes. Employing the latest personal communication technology of the day, Khomeini's audiocassettes were distributed clandestinely in Iran, where they were "extensively copied and played over the telephone lines."[33] In the face of censorship and exile that denied direct access to the TA, Khomeini's low-tech approach was effective and resulted in a full-scale Islamic revolution that ousted the Shah and swept Khomeini into power.

Following the 11 September 2001 terrorist attacks on the United States, Osama bin Laden attempted to employ similar techniques with videotapes, that, in addition to clandestine distribution, were broadcast by Arab-speaking news networks, such as Al Jazeera, reaching as many as 34 million Muslim viewers in the Middle East.[34] A professional analysis of one al Qaeda recruitment video found that bin Laden "is capable of using both the techniques and the professional production skills of the modern television industry to convey his message."[35] Bin Laden's videotaped messages allowed him to reach his TA and inspired others to produce supplementary propaganda products in videocassette form with such titles as "Soldiers of Allah." These would be disseminated via low-tech point distribution means to Islamic fundamentalists worldwide in support of al Qaeda objectives.[36] Al Qaeda's prolific use of video products to reach its TAs proves the effectiveness of the media and demonstrates that our adversaries will compete head-to-head against U.S. efforts to employ video PSYOP, even in "low-tech" conditions.

Obsolescence of Tactical PSYOP Video Dissemination Means. Writing in 1998, former Air Force pilot, CNN correspondent and current Information Operations (IO) analyst Chuck de Caro was critical of "obsolete [PSYOP] doctrine and technologies" and observed that in regard to preparing and disseminating video PSYOP products "little can be accomplished with the current antiquated PSYOP system."[37] In 1999 the Joint Warfighting Capabilities Assessment (JWCA) IO Panel assessed the ability of the PSYOP community to perform its dissemination mission. The JWCA IO Panel found that U.S. PSYOP lacked adequate capabilities to produce commercial-quality video PSYOP products and disseminate those products to denied audiences.[38] These deficiencies were confirmed in a study commissioned by the Joint Staff J39 in June 1999 that recommended USSOCOM "modernize PSYOP production systems, particularly television."[39] Interestingly, both reports focused primarily on broadcasting PSYOP video products on television over the airwaves rather than on tactical point dissemination systems, but U.S. PSYOP forces urgently needed to modernize or replace existing systems to achieve a nonbroadcast dissemination capability, too.

The primary system in the U.S. inventory designated for tactical point dissemination of video products in other-than-broadcast mode is the AN/MSQ-85B Mobile Audiovisual Information Collection and Dissemination System. Few of the AN/MSQ-85B still exist in their original configuration, and these are more museum pieces of 1970s technology than usable equipment. The AN/MSQ-85B includes an AQ-4A movie projector, AN/UIH-6 public address system,

AP-9 slide projector, AN/USH two-track international standard tape recorder, BM-22A large projection screen and R-520A/UUR radio receiver.[40]

While a pristine example of the AN/MSQ-85B was prominently displayed at the Army Transformation Exercise at Fort Irwin, California, during the Joint Forces Command's Millennium Challenge Experiment in July and August 2002, most of the systems in the U.S. inventory have been stripped of their equipment and converted to other uses, namely command and control and product development shelters. In Fiscal Year (FY) 2000, when units of the 4th POG attempted to refurbish two MSQ-85Bs, they discovered that replacement parts were no longer in the Army supply system.[41] This meant that parts had to be individually tooled and manufactured to complete the refurbishment, a cost-prohibitive proposition. The obsolescence of the MSQ-85B has left U.S. forces without a reliable and available means for pinpoint distribution of PSYOP video products in media-austere operating environments.

The Role of Video PSYOP in the Continuum of Military Operations. Video PSYOP is conducted at both the operational and tactical levels of military operations. Operational video PSYOP is generally accomplished through broadcast means to a wide audience, while tactical-level video PSYOP may employ broadcast and other dissemination means to a smaller audience. Video PSYOP, at both the operational and tactical levels, is employed in support of combat operations, post-combat operations and military operations other than war (MOOTW). The effectiveness of video PSYOP is a function of the ability of the friendly force to control the broadcast frequencies to transmit a signal and the TA's access to equipment receiving the signal.

During combat operations U.S. forces are operating in a nonpermissive environment, opposed by enemy forces who may block access to the TA. To reach a denied audience, U.S. PSYOP may overpower existing TV signals and co-opt channels the TA routinely tunes in to, or it can select a new frequency to avoid competition. The friendly force may apply combat power to destroy or temporarily disable enemy broadcast means to defeat enemy propaganda. Broadcasting from aerial platforms, on the ground in the combat zone, or from the territory of friendly third-country states, the reach of the video PSYOP message is limited to the effective range of the ground or air broadcast platform. The range and effective reach of the broadcast signal is, in turn, limited by terrain effects, transmitter output power and enemy efforts to interfere with reception by either electronic-protect counteractions or procedural controls.[42]

Video PSYOP is an important component in humanitarian assistance (HA) and peace support operations (PSO) as well as the post-combat follow-through phase. PSYOP conducted in these scenarios is operating in a semipermissive environment where indigenous government forces, whether opposed or receptive to the U.S. operation, may not be in control of the territory and population. In semi-permissive environments, U.S. PSYOP Soldiers may be able to co-opt government-owned television and radio broadcasting networks or purchase access on commercial stations to broadcast their video and audio messages. Peace operations conducted in operating environments with established television networks typically require a long-term PSYOP broadcasting presence. In these conditions, U.S. PSYOP forces can broadcast a TV signal from organic transmitters, such as the SOMS-B; however, these systems are high-demand/low-density systems.

The general type of PSYOP conducted in PSO or after major combat operations have concluded is known as "consolidation PSYOP." "Consolidation PSYOP is executed in foreign areas inhabited by enemy or hostile populations and occupied by U.S. forces, or in areas where U.S. forces are based."[43] Consolidation PSYOPs "facilitate reorganization and control of occupied or liberated areas in conjunction with civil-military operation."[44] PSYOP in HA and PSO operations is similar to consolidation PSYOP as it shares the connection to civil-military operations and the need to communicate to the population in order to control and accomplish the humanitarian or peace operations mission. Video PSYOP is an effective way to explain on-going civil-military operations to TAs in conjunction with the PSYOP mission.

Media-Austere Operating Environments

Media-austere operating environments are those in which the broadcast means, primarily television and radio, are severely degraded or have not yet developed into maturity, and where the TA does not have access to the equipment (television or radio sets) necessary to receive the broadcast message. U.S. PSYOP forces have faced this challenge in several operations over the past decade. A short review of three operations conducted in the poverty-stricken and media-austere conditions in Somalia, Haiti and Afghanistan, where the TAs were largely illiterate, illustrate the challenges of conducting PSYOP in a media-austere environment.

Operation Provide Hope in Somalia. Launched in December 1992, Operation Provide Hope was a U.S.-led, United Nations coalition humanitarian assistance mission in Somalia intended to counter years of famine and civil war that were devastating the country. The combination of an illiterate society, continuing civil war violence, national famine and the absence of functioning media all made Somalia the prototypical media-austere operating environment during U.S. operations there. The complete breakdown of the country's federal government and several years of civil war ravaging the national and local media and communications infrastructures left Somalia with no operating television or radio stations when Provide Hope commenced.[45] The public telecommunications system had been destroyed or dismantled, leaving only a few Somalis with access to the outside world via radiotelephone, ship-to-shore communications (INMARSAT) or satellite telephones.[46] The combination of the Somali literacy rate of only 24 percent, the absence of a functioning telecommunications system and a debilitated print and broadcast media environment ensured that the TA of Somali adults would be difficult for PSYOP to reach.[47]

Psychological operations were used extensively to support HA operations in Somalia. PSYOP troops ran a local newspaper and radio station in Somali, both called *Rajo*, or "the truth."[48] *Radio Rajo*, constrained by the lack of material to broadcast other than the PSYOP messages in *Newspaper Rajo*, broadcast only 45 minutes twice a day.[49] The content of the newspaper relied heavily on the U.S. Information Agency's daily Wireless File news report sent to the U.S. Liaison Office in Mogadishu.[50] According to a U.S. Institute of Peace Report, the PSYOP newspaper and radio programs "represented the first real communications the Somalis had for two to four years."[51] Video PSYOP products were not used in this operation as the newspaper and radio programs were difficult enough to maintain in the face of technological challenges and lack of content, and few Somalis had access to a television set.

Operation Uphold Democracy in Haiti. Launched in 1996, Operation Uphold Democracy was a peacekeeping mission intended to reinstate exiled President Jean Bertrand Aristide to power and enforce the provisions of the Governor's Island Accord peace agreement. Haiti is another example of a media-austere environment where those who cannot read and are without access to either television or radio may be considered a denied audience. The combination of poverty and illiteracy created a population heavily dependent on broadcast media for information. The U.S. State Department concluded that "broadcast media, especially Creole-language radio, have an unusual importance" in Haiti, given that the adult literacy rate was about 20 percent.[52]

During the three years of the Cedras regime brought to a close by Operation Uphold Democracy, the government attacked media freedoms. Radio journalists were "murdered . . . menaced, beaten and arrested."[53] Despite such censorship, radio stations did broadcast in Haiti and were the primary means of getting news in Haitian society. Even with a functioning radio network, it was necessary to air-drop more than 10,000 radios to enable the Haitian people to hear the daily PSYOP radio broadcasts transmitted from *Commando Solo* (then known as *Volant Solo*).[54]

Leading the information campaign at the operational-strategic level was the U.S. Information Service (USIS). U.S. PSYOP supported the USIS by packaging the themes and messages for delivery by TPTs. The USIS wanted "infomercials" to get the word out quickly about U.S. Civil Affairs Ministerial Advisory Team (MAT) plans and works accomplished.[55] Army peace operations doctrine assigns PSYOP an important role in facilitating cooperation between the peace operation forces, belligerent parties and the populace through the use of radio or television newscasts and traditional print products distribution.[56] During the transition phase from the multinational force to the UN mission in Haiti, PSYOP employed a multimedia campaign to raise popular support for the UN. This campaign included television PSYOP, radio broadcasts, newspaper articles, leaflets, handbills and Tactical Dissemination Team loudspeaker operations.[57]

At the time of Operation Uphold Democracy, the Haitian television network was anemic, making dissemination of video products problematic. Because of the nation's small size, both radio and TV broadcasting efforts from the airborne transmitter on Commando Solo could attain effective coverage. Poverty is the greatest constraint to the development of a mature television-viewing audience in Haiti, where most people do not have access to television due to financial constraints.[58] Video PSYOP was employed at the operational level, although not to the extent of radio PSYOP.

Afghanistan. On the continuum of media-rich to media-austere operating environments, Afghanistan is close to the absolute austere end of the scale. The nation's literacy rate is between 25 and 30 percent; radio and television have more impact than a printed product for the average Afghan.[59] Radio broadcasting in the region began in 1940 with BBC World Service broadcasting in Persian. Programming in Persian and Pashto focusing specifically on Afghanistan began only in 1981, after the Soviet invasion.[60] All Afghan broadcast media were severely damaged during years of civil war and under Taliban rule: 75 percent of Afghanistan's medium-wave radio transmitters were either destroyed or made inoperable, and all six of the country's shortwave radio transmitters also were ruined.[61]

Television broadcasting in Afghanistan began in 1978 as a pilot service in the major cities. Before the fall of the Najibullah regime and ultimate rise of the Taliban, Afghanistan had at least 10 television stations broadcasting in nine of the country's 30 provinces.[62] When the Taliban came to power, all TV broadcasting was ended by decree. The TV equipment that did survive the Taliban regime is completely obsolete: most of the equipment is 25 years old and incorporates vacuum tube technology for which repair parts are usually no longer manufactured or nonexistent.[63] In October 2002 the few remaining TV stations in Afghanistan often lacked cameras and microphones and, in some cases, electricity and telephone service.[64] A 2002 United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) news release reported, ". . . after a ten-year absence of any TV, the Afghan people are eager to watch [video] programming."[65]

For most of OEF, working televisions in Afghanistan have been scarce, being concentrated in just a handful of cities. According to recent media market analyses, 85 percent of the population lives in 37,000 villages without access to television in a nation where only 4 to 10 percent of households have electricity.[66] The few television stations now able to broadcast lack current material and an ability to produce new material.[67] A year after the United States initiated combat operations in Afghanistan, only six television stations were back on the air, in the cities of Herat, Qandahar, Mazar-e-Sharif, Faizabad, Kabul and Jalalabad.[68] The broadcasting range of these stations was limited, at most, to the city limits, leaving the rest of the country without TV reception. Television broadcasting in Afghanistan in early 2003 was limited to just a few hours a day at most stations due to inconsistent electric power, a dearth of programming and antiquated equipment constantly needing repair. In the countryside, the population has, in many cases, never seen televisions, and no organic means are available for the TA to view video products.

It was in these media-austere conditions that U.S. PSYOP forces in Afghanistan were to employ video products to get their message to the TA. In illiterate societies video PSYOP products can deliver a message to the masses without losing clarity. In the 82d Airborne Division's experience in Afghanistan, some of the few literate villagers read printed PSYOP products such as newspapers and leaflets aloud to their neighbors, sometimes with deliberate falsehoods sprinkled in, sometimes with errors in understanding and sometimes with impromptu redaction. Meanwhile, the civilian use of nonbroadcast means to view video products increased dramatically. Videocassettes quickly reemerged as a source of video programming for Afghans, at least for those who had access to electricity, a television and a VCR. The proliferation of video shops in Afghanistan demonstrates the popularity of video in an illiterate society. By September 2002, approximately 100 video shops had opened in Qandahar, the former heart of the Taliban regime; some, according to local reports, opened the day the Americans arrived.[69] The need for video entertainment in Afghanistan has produced a thriving market for mostly illegal copies of films on videocassettes and DVDs.[70] The rapid growth of the market for video products reveals an opportunity U.S. PSYOPs can exploit with video products.

Tactical Video PSYOP Dissemination Capabilities and Limitations

PSYOP doctrine envisions PSYOP Broadcast Companies reaching TAs with video products via over-the-air broadcasts on existing host nation networks or forward-deployed U.S. military broadcast platforms operated by PSYOP broadcast personnel.[71] In a media-

austere environment such as Afghanistan, the absence of both a host nation broadcasting capability and a readily available television audience has meant that video PSYOP has become a point-delivery proposition.

The Tactical PSYOP Companies (TPCs) of the Tactical PSYOP Battalions (POBs) can disseminate video products only with augmentation. While current PSYOP doctrine continues to list the AN/MSQ-85B as an asset organic to the TPC for disseminating video products, none remain in the 4th POG in their original configuration.[72] The TPCs are not equipped to develop and produce video products in the field and would require augmentation in the form of deployable video teams from the Broadcast PSYOP Company of the PSYOP Dissemination Battalion (PDB) to accomplish this task.[73] According to recent Army PSYOP doctrine, TPCs disseminate primarily via "tactical PSYOP products . . . loudspeaker messages, handbills, leaflets, and face-to-face communications."[74] Currently, the TPCs' subordinate TPTs lack any organic tactical dissemination means for video products by organizational design. The TPTs in OEF already were heavily tasked to support combat operations with traditional leaflet, loudspeaker and face-to-face engagements. Nevertheless, in the absence of additional PSYOP forces and means from the POB, when the first video product produced for the Afghan TA arrived, the TPTs were the only PSYOP assets sufficiently distributed with maneuver units to accomplish the video dissemination mission as envisioned by the 82d Airborne commander.

The 4th POG produced a video called "Why the United States is in Afghanistan," which explained in the primary Afghan languages of Dari and Pashtun the 11 September 2001 terrorist attacks on the United States and America's response.[75] At first, the 82d Airborne Division TPTs showed DVDs and VCDs of the video on laptop computers placed on the hoods of High-Mobility Multipurpose Wheeled Vehicles (HMMWVs) to audiences of two to four people during tactical operations in villages. It was quickly obvious that the small screen limited both the size of the audience and the video's visual impact. This method was wholly inadequate to effectively reach the TA. Brigadier General Thomas P. Maney of the U.S. Army Civil Affairs and Psychological Operations Command reported candidly in a New York Times interview that "the American military found it hard to get its [PSYOP] radio and television messages out to many villages that had access to neither."[76]

In October 2002 the 82d Airborne Division drafted a Request for Forces (RFF) message for the deployment of the AN/MSQ-85B system that could show PSYOP videos during operations. The concept was to employ the AN/MSQ-85Bs of the POBs in a "traveling road show," going from village to village as operations permitted. This approach would have nested well with the force-protection constraints in place in late 2002, which led to the 82d Airborne Division concentrating its forces into combined packages that would address all aspects of operations with villages in the unit's area of operations (to include civil-military operations, information operations and maneuver operations). The RFF was not sent because coordination with the PSYOP community revealed that, although 4th POG had AN/MSQ-85Bs in its inventory, the system was not only woefully obsolete but manpower-intensive as well. Deployment would have required deploying additional PSYOP forces, which was a difficult proposition with forces being marshaled for Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF) and the imposition of force cap constraints for OEF.

What the 82d Airborne Division needed was a lightweight system the TPTs could transport in a HMMWV and set up for viewing in direct sunlight for audiences of 10 to 40 people. The system had to be small enough to put in the back of the HMMWV along with the team's equipment and amplifier for the loudspeaker, and it had to be rugged enough to survive the harsh desert environment.

Employment of the doctrinal imperative of "adaptability," namely that PSYOP forces "must adapt to methods and structures and help develop new ones suited for each mission,"[77] was key to overcoming the limitations imposed by having inadequate equipment for the task. Applying this imperative, the 82d Airborne Division purchased through commercial sources a gas-powered electric generator and television set to create a video dissemination system that could reach the TA with PSYOP video. The division G4 (Logistics) purchased equipment for four systems, which were distributed to the TPTs.

Initial operations with the makeshift system were a significant improvement over the laptop computer method and permitted audiences of up to 10 people. However the TPTs encountered the same problem laptop screens had in daylight: the image is difficult to see under the bright sun. TPT 921 hired local Afghans to make a simple plywood cabinet that shaded the screen during daylight operations, improving effectiveness. Still, the audience size was less than would have been provided by a system like the AN/MSQ-85B. Additionally, the commercially procured televisions were not sufficiently rugged to withstand operations in the harsh desert environment.

In November 2002, after employing its ad hoc commercial-off-the-shelf (COTS) technology systems, the 82d Airborne Division sent to the Vice Chief of Staff of the Army Rapid Equipping Force its requirement for a compact, rugged, tactical video point-dissemination system that could show video products in bright sunlight to audiences of up to 40 people. The Rapid Equipping Force provided two prototype systems in December 2002 with TPT 921 and Tactical PSYOP Detachment (TPD) 920 to test on medical civic action programs (MEDCAPS) and tactical patrols. The prototype system was assembled from commercial components and delivered to the division headquarters at Bagram Air Base less than two months after the requirement was identified.

Tactical Video PSYOP Dissemination in OEF. The 82d Airborne Division brought the PSYOP video "Why the United States is in Afghanistan" directly to the people—most of whom had never seen a television—by deploying the TPT with a medical and Civil Affairs (CA) assessment of villages in the American sector. The division commander, then Major General John R. Vines, aggressively supported distribution of the PSYOP video and pushed for including it with every mission that brought coalition soldiers into contact with the civilian populace.[78]

In an environment like Afghanistan's, where combat operations occur alongside humanitarian operations, CA and PSYOP teams work closely together as they pursue different objectives with the same TAs.[79] Army doctrine explains the role of PSYOP support to HA: "The intended target audience may require medical assistance—medical civic action programs (MEDCAPs) or dental civic action programs (DENTCAPs)—or some form of education . . . PSYOP and CA are mutually supporting."[80] If TPTs had adequate video dissemination means, they could better support the HA mission while simultaneously accomplishing PSYOP objectives.

Force protection considerations in OEF mandated that the TPTs show the video products during daylight hours when security for the TPT and civilian viewers could be ensured. By accompanying MEDCAPs into villages in sector, the TPTs adhered to force protection constraints and benefited from the security force established and positioned for the MEDCAP. The PSYOP/CA lash-up in OEF repeated a pattern established in previous operations, such as Operation Joint Guard in Bosnia, where the force protection requirements (e.g., the four-vehicle convoy rule) reinforced the need for Civil Affairs Tactical Support Teams and Tactical PSYOP Teams to combine their operations.[81]

Improving Tactical Video PSYOP Dissemination

Two major approaches are obvious for improving tactical video PSYOP dissemination: 1) acquiring modern, rugged and field-ready dissemination equipment, both for the POBs focused at the tactical/operational level and for the tactically focused TPTs; and 2) acquiring supporting programming that can attract the TA to the PSYOP message. USSOCOM and the U.S. Army Civil Affairs and Psychological Operations Command already have the ability to integrate the first of these approaches into ongoing modernization efforts. The second approach will require interagency collaboration and new thinking about how to view the placement of PSYOP video along with supporting non-PSYOP video material acquired from outside the PSYOP community.

Current PSYOP Modernization Efforts. A next-generation replacement for the AN/MSQ-85B is urgently required to assume the tactical video point dissemination role. USSOCOM's FY 2004/2005 biennial budgets for Research, Development, Testing and Evaluation did not include any funds for such a system, nor did it identify a requirement for such capability.[82] The budget estimates contained no references to means of improving tactical PSYOP video dissemination capabilities in media-austere environments. However, a successor system, generically referred to as the Mobile Audio Visual Dissemination System (MAVS), is in the concept design and requirements phase of development.[83] The PSYOP Doctrine Branch at the John F. Kennedy Special Warfare Center and School envisions this system being deployed with the TPD at the brigade level, but is developing a concept that would push distribution of the MAVS to the battalion level in stability operations and support operations, where the demand for tactical PSYOP support is higher than it would be during combat operations.[84] If video PSYOP is to be effectively disseminated in media-austere operating environments, then tactical dissemination means for the TPTs must also be developed in addition to a successor to the AN/MSQ-85B.

In an effort to modernize PSYOP force capabilities, USSOCOM launched an Advanced Concepts Technology Demonstration (ACTD) to examine various delivery systems that would enable dissemination into "denied areas."[85] Current projects are focused on long-range dissemination into denied hostile areas and include a PSYOP extended-range broadcast system, language-translation technologies and a wind-supported aerial-delivery system.[86] Desired capabilities sought by USSOCOM include a long-range, multidimensional broadcast system; a long-range, three-dimensional holograph imaging system; and long-range, laser-light, text-messaging projection.[87]

Current efforts to expand U.S. PSYOP capabilities to reach denied areas clearly emphasize overcoming limitations imposed by geographic distance, enemy threats (such as air defense) and enemy actions on the ground that isolate the TA. For PSYOP following combat operations (consolidation PSYOP) and for PSYOP in support of humanitarian assistance or peace operations, several factors routinely combine to deny an audience for PSYOP video products. Experience in Somalia, Haiti and Afghanistan shows that the low literacy rates, lack of access to televisions and absence of an infrastructure that supports a television network combine to create "denied audiences."

Supporting PSYOP Video with Supplementary Programming. To be successful, tactical dissemination must emulate the mature media environment by providing an entertainment base to which PSYOP messages may be added. News is an effective format that provides a service to the TA while providing the draw that makes the PSYOP message more appealing as part of an overall package.[88] The 4th POG has limited abilities to develop and produce video products, such as the "Why the United States is in Afghanistan" video. To get enough material to support the PSYOP videos, the PSYOP community must seek external sources of appropriate video programming.

In his Military Review article, Commander Randall Bowdish observed that "military media capability is no match for the civilian sector" and recommended employing content from the commercial sector and products from government agencies in support of PSYOP messages.[89] The DSB Task Force reached the same conclusion and specifically recommended "a liberal reliance on recognized professionals and generous use of highly qualified commercial entities; buying good content on which the messages will 'ride' is a necessary and desirable expenditure" (emphasis mine).[90] The DSB Task Force found that in addition to commercial products, several U.S. government agencies might have unique and appropriate video, such as health and safety products, that could be dubbed with voice-over translation in support of PSYOP programming. In a May 2002 report on Afghanistan prepared for the Department of Defense (DoD), the Rendon Group recommended that "U.S. television programming should be made immediately available to Afghan government TV . . . material could include sports, documentaries, and even culturally appropriate Hollywood films."[91]

Ideally, such programming should reinforce the general IO themes. Army tactical visual information doctrine from 1993 suggests appropriate content for supporting footage as "documentation that depicts scenes of reconstruction and rehabilitation with respect to installations, housing, and people-connected facilities in war-devastated areas under friendly control."[92] U.S. Army PSYOP doctrine suggests that tactical PSYOP forces may support news dissemination that keeps the people informed in order to support an overall political indoctrination or reorientation program typical to post-combat operations and PSO.[93] Execution of this TTP by deployed PSYOP forces requires supporting video programming and material.

Lessons learned in Bosnia pointed to the need for adaptable solutions incorporating COTS technology to acquire video material in support of PSYOPs.[94] In Operation Joint Guard, PSYOP soldiers employed commercially procured digital video recorders and personal computers to produce viable PSYOP video products in the field.[95] Currently, the Broadcast PSYOP Company

(POC) of the POB can deploy video teams with mobile equipment capable of producing high-quality video.[96] While PSYOP forces can certainly acquire needed imagery on their own, they also can request support from attached or assigned services or joint combat camera (COMCAM) units. Army and Joint doctrine assign COMCAM units the mission of supporting PSYOP with still and video imagery.[97] Support to PSYOP is not the primary mission for COMCAM elements; they are, nevertheless, an excellent source of video imagery of current operations and civil and societal conditions in the area of operations.

COMCAM elements routinely accompany military operations in support of the commander's battlefield visualization and operations documentation requirements. In addition to its combat documentation and battlefield visualization missions, COMCAM can provide powerful images of U.S. forces that could be incorporated into supporting Public Affairs (PA) and PSYOP video products, especially in military operations other than war. Beyond organic PSYOP and support from COMCAM capabilities, the Navy's Fleet Audio-Visual Command, Pacific, the Fleet Imagery Command, Atlantic, and the Naval Imaging Command are sources of supporting audiovisual products for PSYOP.[98] All of these methods of obtaining video material, however, are insufficient for building a supporting base of video programming on which PSYOP programming can ride. Building and sustaining such a base will require co-opting commercial video programming.

Building a Television/Video Base Appropriate to the Target Audience. When the 82d Airborne Division deployed to Afghanistan in 2002, official Afghan TV was broadcasting only five hours a day with an erratic schedule and could not reach beyond the limits of Kabul.[99] Because of civil wars leading to the Taliban's rise to power and the ban on all television during the Taliban regime, a dearth of video programming was available for the Afghan viewing audience. The need for additional material as a draw for the PSYOP message was especially critical in Afghanistan because only one PSYOP video product was available, making the TPT a "one-trick pony." Commercially produced programming that is culturally appropriate can draw the TA to the medium, serving as the lure for U.S. PSYOP-produced video products.

In December 2002, the 82d Airborne Division sought to procure through the State Department programming produced by Ariana Television, an Afghan-American television broadcasting studio in Northern Virginia. The intent was to make these videos available to tactical PSYOP forces in Afghanistan to create a draw for crowds to see the 4th POG video. Organizational barriers between the State Department, which has subsumed the former U.S. Information Service, and USSOCOM, which controls U.S. PSYOP forces, must be breached in order to facilitate the use of commercially produced ethnic-, cultural- and linguistic-appropriate video products in support of PSYOP.

In pursuit of appropriate video material to support video PSYOP, another option is to tap into international efforts to address the media austerity of the target nation. UNESCO started a drive for nations to donate programming for the revived Afghan TV stations. According to Rosa Gonzalez of the UNESCO Communications Development Division, the "Screens Without Frontiers" video drive provided more than 300 programs for which programming rights have been waived.[100] In addition to the donated programming, UNESCO purchased the rights to 102

television programs from countries around the globe and made them available to Afghan Radio-Television at no charge for a two-year period under the CreaTV television initiative.[101]

Effective video PSYOP, especially broadcast video PSYOP, requires supplementary programming beyond military sources. The requirements to sustain a daily video program are demanding: "Each day's operation requires a large amount of film, videotape, and live programming to sustain a program schedule."[102] Reaching out to U.S. government, private industry and international sources can ensure that PSYOP forces challenged to conduct video PSYOPs have enough material from which to assemble a quality video program.

Conclusion and Recommendations

At the close of the 20th century, the Institute for National and Strategic Studies recognized that the most likely operations to involve PSYOP forces would be conducted in what the report termed a "low-tech environment," one in which the extant media will be limited.[103] Current post-combat operations in Afghanistan support this contention. U.S. Southern Command's recent deployment of a Combined Joint Task Force (CJTF) to Haiti on 1 March 2004 in Operation Secure Tomorrow demonstrates that U.S. PSYOP forces continue to face the challenge of operating in media-austere environments. The mission of the CJTF is to ensure stability and return order as part of a multinational interim force.[104] Like Operation Uphold Democracy, this new operation is employing PSYOP forces to gain the cooperation of the Haitian people to resolve the current crisis and reduce the causes of instability. As with Afghanistan, Haiti's low literacy rate makes video imagery a powerful vehicle and therefore an effective option for PSYOP messages. Renewed operations in Haiti and continuing operations in Afghanistan demonstrate that PSYOP forces will continue to be deployed in media-austere operating environments. As PSYOP in Afghanistan demonstrated, the requirement for a tactical video dissemination system for media-austere operating environments is a historical fact. As the Army transforms to meet the new threat landscape and incorporates the latest technology, it should ensure that it has the capability to disseminate video PSYOP at the tactical level, if that is the requirement of the Joint Force Commander and the situation.

USSOCOM, through DoD, must work with the State Department and other agencies to access supporting video programming based on likely areas where U.S. forces could be employed in combat or MOOTW. The procedures and contacts must be made during peacetime to permit rapid execution in time of crisis. All video products of the U.S. government should be available for use in support of PSYOP, after modifications to make them linguistically, ethnically and culturally appropriate to the TA. Likewise, the State Department should work with international sources to obtain access to third-country video programming that could support U.S. PSYOP by sustaining the interest of the TA during both broadcast and point dissemination video PSYOP. U.S. PSYOP forces must be able to rapidly respond to the changing mission with new PSYOP video products that complement radio and print products and sustain the audience with supporting programming from government or international sources.

Joint PSYOP doctrine states, "the dissemination plan must take into account the type of PSYOP product . . . and the means to deliver [it]."[105] Unfortunately, while the TPTs in OEF had a video product, they lacked the means to disseminate it. The absence of delivery means violated

the doctrinal media-selection assessment criteria of "Availability." Availability of a medium is determined by asking this question: "Is the medium available to the PSYOP unit?" According to recent doctrine, this assessment criterion covers the availability of personnel "as well as equipment."[106] USSOCOM must acquire the necessary tactical dissemination means to make video products available to deployed PSYOP forces operating in media-austere conditions.

USSOCOM must equip its POBs so they can accomplish their doctrinally assigned role in tactical video dissemination. A successor to the AN/MSQ-85B should receive accelerated development and procurement priority. Any delay in the design, development and fielding of a successor to the MSQ-85B may lead to "mission failure" for U.S. PSYOP.[107]

Additionally, USSOCOM's ACTD should include the prototype Rapid Equipping Force delivered to the 82d Airborne in Afghanistan. Recent operations have shown the need for a tactical video PSYOP dissemination system that could accompany the TPTs, is rugged enough to survive operations in harsh environments and is compact enough to be carried along with the TPT's basic combat load in an already cramped HMMWV. If U.S. PSYOP is once again called upon to operate in a media-austere environment where operational-level broadcast systems fail to reach a large segment of the TA, then tactical dissemination means will be required.

In Afghanistan, U.S. forces attempted to bridge the gap between the potential impact of video PSYOP, with its mass appeal and powerful imagery, and ad-hoc, makeshift solutions. However, a permanent solution is required to provide tactical PSYOP forces the necessary means to disseminate video in a media-austere environment. Without adequate tactical dissemination means for the POBs and TPTs, U.S. video PSYOP cannot reach denied audiences in media-austere operating environments. Without supporting programming that is ethnically, linguistically and culturally appropriate in content, U.S. PSYOP forces won't be able to attract and sustain TA interest, regardless of whatever dissemination means they are forced to develop in the absence of mission-designed issued systems.

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