

The Information Operations Process

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Within the past two years, much has been written and said about Information Operations (IO). **FM 100-6, Information Operations**, was published, and IO found its way into the Army lexicon. Still much confusion remains--IO is still many different things to many different people. And the fact is IO includes a broad range of diverse disciplines and activities. Using information systems, protecting information systems, conducting deception all run the gamut of IO. This article focuses on one aspect of IO. My purpose is to offer prospective IO staff officers a methodology--a template for planning, implementing, and evaluating what I call the perception management piece of IO. Hopefully, this article will also be of use to those individuals working with the IO staff officer. Personnel in support of the IO staff officer must be knowledgeable of his role in IO. It is understandable that these individuals, knowing that the U.S. Army has been conducting PSYOP, deception Electronic Warfare, OPSEC, and physical destruction for a long time, would want to know what is different now. The foundation of this article is based on personal observations of Task Force Eagle's IO cell in Bosnia during December 1997 and the work done by LTC Garry Beavers and LTC (Ret) Stephen Shanahan of the Land Information Warfare Activity (LIWA).¹

Perception Management: Actions to convey or deny selected information and indicators to foreign audiences to influence their emotions, motives, and objective reasoning; and to intelligence systems and leaders at all levels to influence official estimates, ultimately resulting in foreign behaviors and official actions favorable to the originators objective. (Joint Pub 1-02)

Scenario

JTF Falcon has the mission to conduct Peace Operations in the former Soviet Republic of Ublestan. The JTF's IO staff officer, augmented with a team from the Joint Command and Control Warfare Center (JC2WC), has developed an IO campaign plan to support the CINC's Campaign Plan. To execute the objectives in the IO campaign plan, a series of IO programs will need to be developed by the subordinate Land Component Command (LCC). The Commander of the LCC wants an IO plan, which will support the JTF's IO campaign plan, but will also assist him in accomplishing his mission of protecting lives and property in case of riots in the multi ethnic city of Tajmil. Municipal elections will be held in 90 days, and the concern exists that the losing political party will instigate riots after the election results are announced. The Armor Division (AD), forming the LCC for JTF Falcon is combat ready, and has enough fire power to quell any riot, but the commander would prefer to avoid using force. Thus, he wants his IO staff officer to develop and execute an IO plan that will assist his diplomatic efforts in preventing the citizens in and around Tajmil from rioting.

Organization

The division's IO cell is comprised of the Division's IO officer and a three-man Field Support Team (FST) from the LIWA. The FST provides expertise in deception, OPSEC, and tools for IO modeling, targeting, and synchronization. One can see that the IO cell is not large enough, nor does it possess the skills in all the C²W elements to plan and execute all the necessary IO. For the division to have an IO capability that is robust and fully integrated and synchronized, the IO officer uses the Information Operations Working Group (IOWG). The composition of the IOWG is mission contingent. In our scenario, it is comprised of representatives from the IO cell, G3 Plans, G2 Plans, Public Affairs, Civil Affairs (CA), G6, PSYOP, Warfare, Staff Judge Advocate, Political Advisor (POLAD), Special Operations Command and Control Element (SOCCE), Provost Marshal Office (PMO), and Counterintelligence. In his role as facilitator, the IO officer ensures that the talents and creativity of the individual members of the IOWG are fully exploited in achieving the IO objectives. The following IO process provides the IO officer with a template for conducting Information Operations.

IO Process

The IO process is a 12-step method that forms a template for planning, implementing, and evaluating IO. It is not doctrine, and it differs, albeit slightly, from the one being used by the LIWA in Bosnia, but it is offered here as a point of reference. Hopefully, this article will lead to further discussion and improvements in IO modeling and Measures of Effectiveness (MOE), which, in my opinion, are the two major shortfalls in the execution of IO. The reader should keep in mind that what Joint Pub 3-58 says of deception planning is true of the IO Process: *"Although diagrams of planning processes are useful in*

aiding the understanding of the individual elements of the process, it must be remembered that processes are seldom as linear as diagrams or flow charts may imply. Planners must be prepared to respond to the dynamics of the situation and of their own headquarters." What follows are the 12 steps that the IO cell and the IOWG must follow to achieve effective Information Operations.

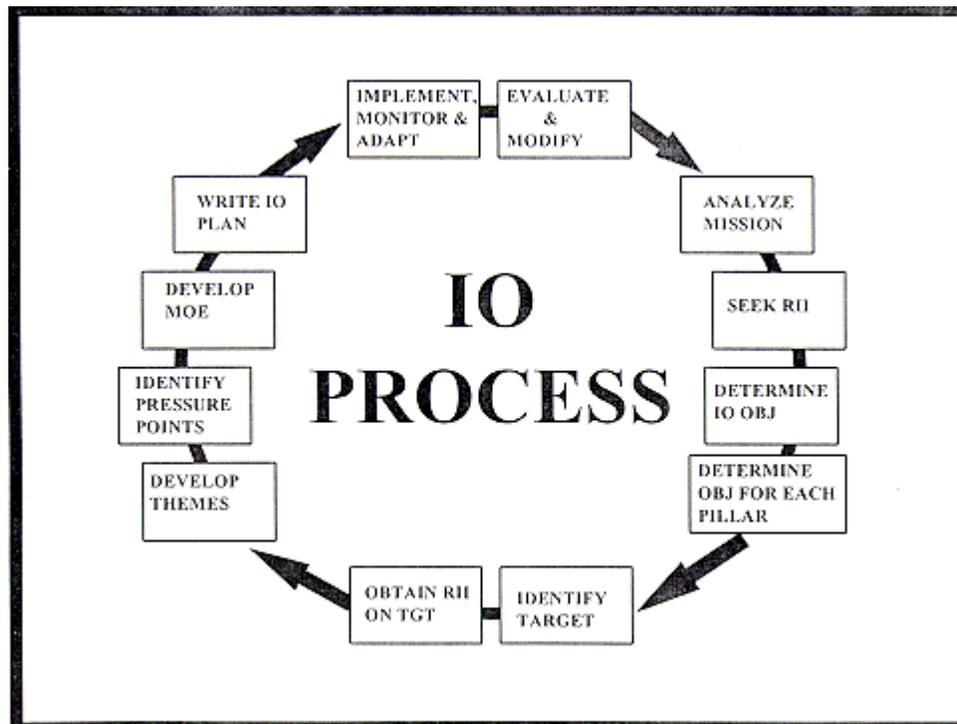


FIGURE 1

TECHNIQUES AND PROCEDURES

Analyze the Mission

The IO officer and his cell analyzes the mission to determine the military and political objectives and the commander's intent. The IO cell collects all available Relevant Information and Intelligence (RII) and begins to formulate the questions that he will need answered. If not already created, the G2 develops an IO Intelligence Preparation of the Battlefield.

The IO officer presents the work the IO cell completed to the IOWG. The other members of the IOWG are analyzing the mission to determine how they can best contribute to achieve the commander's objectives. Here in the IOWG, the IO officer serves as a facilitator. His task is to exploit the creativity, talent, and experience of all the members. It is a team effort. And, although following the IOWG meetings the members will go back to their individual work sites to plan and manage their activities, it is through the IOWG that the IO officer gains synergy by ensuring that IO is fully coordinated and synchronized. For the rest of the IO process, the reader can assume that the steps are carried out by the IOWG functioning as a team.

Seek RII

Relevant Information and Intelligence (RII) is the key to effective IO. It is needed to plan, implement, monitor, and evaluate. The G2 representative is the IO officer's link to RII. The IOWG develops Request for Intelligence (RFI), which the G2 representative works. He ensures RFIs are properly submitted, monitored, and answered, providing feedback to the IOWG. This does not mean the other members can sit back and wait for the "answers." They will be using their sources to collect RII. PSYOP, Civil Affairs (CA), CI, and SOCCE teams in the field will be collecting RII. The IO cell is aggressively exploiting the unclassified internet and the various military nets. The POLAD also has sources. The PAO will provide the IOWG with information on the media environment in which friendly forces are operating. Maintenance contact teams, logistic teams, engineers, reconnaissance elements, and Infantry and Military Police patrols are exploited for RII. The point is that the myriad of sources are fully exploited, and RII is shared within the IOWG.

Determine IO Objectives

An IO objective is a specific and operational statement regarding the desired accomplishments of the IO program. For each IO objective, the planner strives to use strong verbs, states only one purpose or aim, specifies a single end-product or result, and specifies the expected time for achievement.² It is important to remember that the closer the objectives are to outcomes that can be directly measured, the more likely it is that a competent evaluation will result. Using our scenario, the IO cell determines as an IO objective the following: *"Within 90 days, dissuade the populace of Tajmil from rioting."* Dissuade is the strong verb. The IOWG has the one aim of dissuading the populace from rioting, and the specified outcome is the lack of rioting. The outcome that can be easily measured. The populace either riots or they do not. This IO objective becomes the overarching objective for each of the IOWG members. They will develop objectives for their individual elements of C²W and Public Affairs (PA) and Civil Affairs (CA).

Determine Objectives for Each Element

The IO Staff Officer needs to know what the objectives of the elements of C²W and PA and CA are and how they will aid in achieving the overarching IO objectives. Although members will come to the IOWG with objectives already in mind, it is important to go through a brainstorming process. Brainstorming takes up valuable time, but is time well spent. It fosters team ownership of the objectives; it provides a sanity check; and it allows the members to know each other's intent, creating opportunities for synergy. Brainstorming will ensure that the IO and the elements' objectives are clear, distinct, and focused, and, more importantly, will assist the members in understanding the connectivity between the elements' objectives and the overarching IO objective.

Keeping with our scenario, one PSYOP objective might be: Inform the target audience of the ramifications of any rioting. If ramifications include military response, it is imperative that the military and diplomatic agencies are capable and have the resolve to follow through on the military actions. This example illustrates why PSYOP themes must be approved by higher. (The approval process should not be that cumbersome. The objectives and themes for PSYOP, deception, and the other of C²W will be rolled into the IO program, which can easily be shown to support the CINC's IO campaign plan.) One might argue that "inform" is not a strong verb, and, admittedly, "inform" is a long way from "dissuade," but to simply inform is a necessary step toward achieving the IO objective.

It can also be easily measured. The military deception objective might be: Convince the target audience that certain areas will be heavily patrolled and monitored by ground and air assets. **When in reality, the friendly assets are not available to conduct such operations as described.** Electronic Warfare (EW) might have the objective to *"Degrade and disrupt the capability of faction leaders to communicate electronically during a certain period of time."* **The time might be triggered by some event that indicates rioting is imminent.** It must be remembered that the purpose of these objectives is to achieve the IO objective. Achieving an individual element's objective and not achieving the IO objective is a failure for the IOWG.

Identify IO Targets

The IO cell identifies IO targets and presents this list to the IOWG for additions and deletions; other IOWG members will have targets that the IO cell did not have. Targets will, of course, be quite diversified. They could be key communicators, a certain segment of the population, or a set of radio towers that are being used to encourage people to riot. The probability of success is increased if a target can be attacked by more than one pillar of C²W.

Obtain detailed information about the target audience.

As a minimum, RII about the target audience should consist of the following:

- Political agendas
- Biographic information
- Decisionmaking processes
- Demographic information: age, sex, race, religion, economic income, cultural likes and dislikes.
- The target's perceptions of friendly capabilities and possible courses of action
- The target's IO capabilities and processes
- Estimates of target's actions under differing scenarios

One area where work is needed is in the field of modeling and simulation for IO. The difficulty of quantifying results

produced by IO activities has caused modeling for IO to lag behind the more conventional force-on-force modeling. However, work is being done with such modeling tools as the Advanced Regional Exploratory System (ARES), the Deployable Exercise Support System (DEXES), and SPECTRUM show promise. As these and other tools are developed, modeling will aid the IO staff officer in evaluating various courses of action and objectives and in estimating the target's actions under different scenarios.

PSYOP personnel are trained in target audience analysis--the process by which potential target audiences are identified and analyzed for effectiveness, accessibility, and susceptibility. This type of analysis prepares the IOWG for the next step--developing themes.

Develop Friendly Information Themes

FM 33-1, *Psychological Operations*, defines a theme as a subject, topic, or line of persuasion used to achieve a objective. Themes to use and avoid will often be passed down from higher. However, that is not to say themes could not be developed at the Land Component level. PSYOP personnel have the skills, expertise, and experience to develop themes. But again, as with objectives, themes should be discussed within the IOWG for possible improvement and to ensure that all members are thoroughly familiar with them. In our scenario, possible themes are: *"Peaceful protests is the appropriate way to communicate your desire for political change."* *"Violence will be met with force in order to protect lives and property."* *"Rioting will delay and possibly stop the rebuilding of roads and homes and the inflow of economic aid."* It is important to remember that the themes are not necessarily PSYOP themes. Providing the right piece of information to the right audience with the purpose of reinforcing or creating perceptions or to cause ambiguity is the goal. However, thinking in terms of themes, allows the IOWG to develop, identify and create that "right piece" of information.

Identify Pressure Points

A pressure point is an important, essential, or primary factor that can be influenced to control behavior. As with objectives and themes, the IO officer should facilitate an IOWG discussion with the purpose of identifying pressure points and ways that they can best be exploited. In our scenario, the people of Tajmil desperately need economic aid. This aid is a pressure point. It will be made clear to the citizens of Tajmil that the delivery of aid will depend on whether or not the political leaders support democracy.

Develop Measures of Effectiveness (MOE)

Developing MOE for IO is, in my opinion, the most difficult step in the IO process. Without MOE, the IOWG will not be able to evaluate the effectiveness of the IO program. A commander has the right and the responsibility to ask his IO staff officer this simple question: *"How do we know this IO stuff is helping me achieve my overall objectives?"*

Thus, the IOWG needs to build MOE into the IO plan so that the following three critical metrics can be measured:

- **Effectiveness.** Describes the relationship between outputs and objectives. Were the IO objectives achieved? If not, why not?
- **Efficiency.** Describes the relationship of inputs and outputs. Although the IO program may have been effective, could there have been ways to accomplish it quicker and cheaper?
- **Adaptability.** Describes the ability of the IOWG to respond to changing demands. Was there sufficient flexibility to adjust a PSYOP program or deception plan to react to an unexpected event?

MOE can be classified as either quantitative or qualitative. Michael Patton in his book, ***Utilization-Focused Evaluation***, states, *"Quantitative methodology assumes the necessity, desirability, and even the possibility of applying some underlying empirical standard to social phenomena. By way of contrast, qualitative methodology assumes that some phenomena are not amenable to numerical mediation."*³

Quantitative research is desirable when:

- A picture of the environment at a given point in time is needed.
- Data that can be projected to a larger universe is needed.

- The target audience is difficult to reach.
- Large amount of specific information from the target audience is sought.
- The data must be statistically representative of a very large geographic area.

Qualitative Research is desirable when:

- Modifications need to be made in an idea before it is finalized.
- Very fast feedback from the targeted audience is needed.
- The research budget is limited.
- There is a need to probe deeply into the cause of some observed behavior. ⁴

The point here is that different kinds of assessments require different types of MOE. The IOWG should not get locked into thinking that if MOE are not quantifiable they are of no use.

Write the IO Plan

With the information obtained thus far, the IO cell is now ready to write the IO plan. The written document might be in the format of an IO Annex to a CONPLAN or OPLAN. In addition, the IO cell uses a series of worksheets, matrices, and gant charts to record and display objectives, pressure points, tasks, milestones, and timelines. ⁵

Implement and Monitor the IO Campaign Plan

During this step, the plan is executed. The plan is monitored, and feedback begins to be collected. The collection of RII continues. A Synchronization Matrix is used to deconflict and synchronize IO activity. The members of the IOWG are constantly using RII, MOE, and feedback to evaluate the effectiveness of their individual activities, allowing them to fine-tune the plan and adjust to unexpected events. The focus is on coordinating, adapting, and achieving synergy. Figure 2 is a portion of a matrix that depicts how the components of IO are mutually supporting. Let me state emphatically that PA and CA do not conduct PSYOP or deception, nor are these components of IO manipulated by the PSYOP and deception planners. However, they and the elements of C²W, by staying in their own lanes and providing information that create the desired perceptions, can achieve synergy, and, thus, increase the probability of achieving the IO objectives.

	PSYOP	Deception	CA	PA
PSYOP can support by:		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Creating perceptions that will enhance believability of deception plan • Providing RII to IOWG 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Informing the populace on the benefits being provided by CA • Loud speaker teams helping control the populace during aid distribution • Explaining to populace why certain groups are not receiving their perceived "fair share" of aid 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conducting counter-propaganda and protection from misinformation and disinformation • Produce articles by key communicators that encourage respect for democracy and rule of law
Deception can support by:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Disseminating information that reinforces PSYOP themes • Creating perceptions that 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reinforcing CA themes in the content of deception information 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Creating perceptions that support PA-desired perceptions

	enhance susceptibility to PSYOP themes			
CA can support by:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Providing aid to Host Nation, which gives substance to PSYOP themes • Providing RII 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Providing RII to IOWG • Disseminating truthful information that reinforces believability of deception plan 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Providing events that PA can exploit that will show the command in a positive light
PA can support by:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Providing information that counters adversary's propaganda • Providing interviews with commanders who articulate JTF's reaction to rioting 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Providing stories that show the unit is combat-ready and prepared to respond to riots 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Publicizing financial and humanitarian aid given to Host Nation • Providing information on how the populace is to receive aid, i.e., times and locations 	

FIGURE 2

Evaluate the IO Program

As stated earlier, MOE are built into the plan. The purpose of some of these is to provide the IOWG with an azimuth check, enabling the IO planners to adapt their plans as necessary. MOE are also used to evaluate the overall effectiveness of the IO program. Knowing the effectiveness, the IOWG can decide whether to modify the existing IO program and continue, to continue without change, or to end it.

One more comment on MOE. Developing and implementing IO MOE must be a team effort by the IOWG. The PSYOP element's pretesting and post-testing of a product or evaluation of a PSYOP program needs to be shared with the IOWG. Other members could possibly use the feedback to evaluate their own efforts. This information is needed by the IO staff officer to evaluate the overall IO program. Also, resources can be saved if one evaluation could answer the questions needed by other members of the IOWG.

Conclusion

The challenges facing the IO staff officer are formidable. Getting the IO Working Group to function as a team, obtaining RII, and measuring IO effectiveness are just a few of the hurdles he must overcome. He needs additional tools to monitor and evaluate IO at the sophistication equal to his civilian counterparts in marketing and political campaigning. Thus, much work remains, but the IO process does provide the IO staff officer with a needed methodology to plan and implement Information Operations.

1. LTC Garry Beavers and LTC Stephan Shanahan, U.S. Army, Ret, *"Operationalizing IO in Bosnia-Herzegovina,"* Land Information Warfare Activity, Ft. Belvoir, VA.

2. Peter H. Rossi and Howard E. Freeman, *Evaluation* (Beverly Hills: SAGE Publications, 1982), pg. 59.

3. Michael Quinn Patton, *Utilization-Focused Evaluation* (Beverly Hills: SAGE Publications, 1978), pg. 212.

4. Thomas L. Greenbaum, *The Handbook for Focus Group Research* (New York: Lexington Books, 1993), pg. 30.

5. Beavers and Shanahan used the following worksheets and matrices in their work in Bosnia:

- ***Pressure Point Identification Worksheet (PPIW)***. The PPIW provides the IO planner with a systematic way to identify ways to influence target audiences.
 - ***IO Planning Worksheet (PW)***. The IO planner uses the PW to determine how and when to influence each pressure point.
 - ***Synchronization Matrix (SM)***. The SM is used to deconflict and synchronize IO activity.
 - ***IO Implementation Worksheet (IW)***. The IW is used to record additional information about each IO event found on the SM. In addition to identifying the attack "subsystem," the worksheet identifies the specific information themes that will be used for each IO audience.
 - ***IO Implementation Matrix (IM)***. The IM chronologically lists all IO executions for each IO function. Information from the IM is carried forward to the optional IO Implementation Graphic.
 - ***IO Implementation Graphic (IG)***. The IG graphically portrays scheduled IO activity during a specific time period.
-