

CONCEPTS

PSYCHOLOGICAL OPERATIONS (PSYOPS) WITHIN THE AUSTRALIAN INTELLIGENCE CORPS

SHOULD IT STAY OR SHOULD IT GO?

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ABSTRACT

This article analyses the current ADF psychological operations (PSYOPS) capability and whether it should be managed by the Australian Intelligence Corps or whether it requires a new capability manager.

The essence of war is a violent clash between two hostile, independent and irreconcilable wills, each trying to impose itself on the other.¹

INTRODUCTION

While political and technological developments change the character of warfare, its nature, as a violent clash of wills, remains unchanged. Warfare is profoundly influenced by political processes at the local, regional and global levels. These processes are driven by human perceptions—'winning the perception battle underpins military operations and is an essential prerequisite for success'.²

When this is over, it will be asked what was different about this operation from others. One of those things will be that we conducted information operations.

General Peter Cosgrove, AC, MC

As General Cosgrove eludes, information operations, with psychological operations (PSYOPS) being key to its effective use, is an important element of all forms of warfare and has consistently been used by the ADF as a non-kinetic combat multiplier, having influenced selected target audiences on operations within Vietnam, Bougainville, East Timor/Timor Leste, the Solomon Islands, Iraq and most recently in Afghanistan. In recognition of this importance, the PSYOPS capability should be carefully managed and it is worth reviewing its current home in the Australian Army's Intelligence Corps.

PSYOPS are operations planned to convey selected information to a targeted audience to influence attitudes and behaviours of governments, organisations, groups and individuals. To accomplish this goal, PSYOPS must have a clearly defined mission and the ability to conduct in-depth analysis, evaluate appropriate target audience/s and measure their effectiveness on the targeted audience against the supported commander's mission and/or line of operation. Furthermore, PSYOPS can be employed to gather information to enhance situational awareness, undermine hostile PSYOPS and enhance own force capabilities.

The basic aspects of modern PSYOPS, as employed by the ADF, have been known by many other names, including psychological warfare, political warfare, propaganda and the more recently coined 'hearts and minds'. But the name PSYOPS is the current accepted terminology and is defined as '... the use of propaganda and tactics in a hostile situation to influence people to accept a particular belief, undertake a course of action, weaken their will to resist ...'.³

For PSYOPS to be employed effectively, it must be synchronised and deconflicted across the full spectrum of war and all lines of operation. In order to allow a commander the flexibility to achieve this, PSYOPS is divided into the following three categories, commonly referred to as White, Grey and Black:

- White PSYOPS are those operations in which the source of information is acknowledged by the originator. Since re-raising the ADF's PSYOPS capability after the Vietnam conflict, White PSYOPS have been the cornerstone of its success. From the production of news leaflets, music cassettes and use of the much enjoyed soccer ball, White PSYOPS overtly amplify the goodwill of the commander's mission to those whom it is aligned. White PSYOPS is often incorrectly referred to as 'hearts and minds,' a term often mistaken or misused by the media for a number of information operations capabilities, particularly PSYOPS, civil-military cooperation and public affairs.
- Grey PSYOPS are those operations in which the source is not identified and/or acknowledged in any manner by the originator. Grey PSYOPS are employed across the entire operational environment, although are not as common as White PSYOPS. Furthermore, Grey PSYOPS, when employed in a manner supporting governments, organisations, groups and individuals (who do not have the capability to produce their own information (PSYOPS) but are aligned to the commander's intent), immeasurably bolsters a target audience in support of the commander's mission.
- Black PSYOPS are inherently deceitful, with the information contained in the product being attributed to a source that was not responsible for its creation. More often Black PSYOPS is conducted to foster insurrection and/or internal disruption within a threat group, whether that be a conventional military force or an insurgency (as experienced in Iraq and Afghanistan). Black PSYOPS supports kinetic and non-kinetic targeting, particularly within the command and control component of a threat force. But due to its inherent nature, and if not employed correctly, there is an increased risk to the commander of being exposed as deceitful, untrustworthy and lacking credibility. This has the potential to severely degrade the commander's ability to achieve the mission. Black PSYOPS is thereby the most tightly controlled and least used of the three categories.

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Considering the role of PSYOPS, let us briefly examine intelligence in the context of military intelligence and its employment within the Australian Army. As mentioned, the ADF's PSYOPS capability resides within the Australian Intelligence Corps, whose role is to 'provide the intelligence support required by commanders and staffs at all levels of command.'⁴ Australian Intelligence Corps officers and soldiers are employed in two core areas: combat intelligence and counter intelligence.

- Combat intelligence is defined as the knowledge of the enemy, weather and terrain, which is used in the planning and conduct of tactical operations.⁵
- Counter intelligence is the activity that pertains to all security control measures designed to safeguard information against espionage, personnel against subversion, and installations or material against sabotage.⁶

In a holistic sense, military intelligence is a discipline that exploits a number of information collection and analysis approaches to provide guidance and advice to commanders in support of their decisions. This is achieved by providing an assessment of available data from a wide range of sources, directed towards the commander's mission requirements or responding to focused questions as part of the operational or campaign planning activity.⁷

To surmise, the function of PSYOPS is to identify target audiences and influence their perceptions so they act in a manner favourable to the commander's mission. Whereas the function of military intelligence is to identify the threat, and inform the commander of what the threat is and what it will do next in order to support the commander's decision making process.

PSYOPS and intelligence, therefore, are distinct skills, despite having some subtle similarities. The PSYOPS capability, as per most military functions, should be intelligence-led, preferably with organic intelligence support, but the capability does not require intelligence trained personnel to conduct its specific forms of operations. As a result, it does not necessarily belong within the Australian Intelligence Corps (or the intelligence domain). In recognition of this fact, PSYOPS has previously been housed in a number of Australian Army corps including Psychology, Education and Public Affairs. Further, PSYOPS is often perceived, and rightly so, as an operations or plans function.

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CURRENT PSYOPS COMMAND AND CONTROL

The outcome of conflict will increasingly be decided in the minds of these populations rather than on the battlefield.⁸

The dilemma now exists: PSYOPS is not an intelligence function, nor is it referred to within Army's Intelligence Surveillance Targeting Acquisition Reconnaissance (ISTAR) doctrine. Nevertheless, it now resides within Army's ISTAR organisation. The reason for this predicament is the end result of the PSYOPS capability's higher headquarters having changed several times since the creation of 1st Intelligence Battalion (2000), which was originally commanded by Land Headquarters, then

commanded by Headquarters 1st Division (2006), and more recently commanded by 6th Brigade (2010). None of these changes have taken into account that the capability is not an intelligence function, nor is it an ISTAR function. Within the ABCA community the ADF's model is in stark contrast to that of its allies. The US, UK and Canadian militaries maintain standalone PSYOPS capabilities.⁹

Nevertheless, since the mid 1990s the Australian Intelligence Corps has been responsible for the raise, train and sustain functions of the PSYOPS capability and since that time there has been, and continues to be, much debate with regards to the capability; predominantly, where it should reside.

This debate in itself, and the uneasy acceptance of PSYOPS within the Australian Intelligence Corps, has proven to be a constraint to the capability and its ongoing development.

PSYOPS AND NATIONAL/STRATEGIC POLICY

The 2009 Defence White Paper *Defending Australia in the Asia Pacific Century: Force 2030* identifies that 'The Government has decided that it will further develop the ADF's capacity to deploy specialists to conduct field intelligence and information operations.'¹⁰ Therefore, PSYOPS as one of the key information operations elements¹¹ has been and continues to be integral to the ADF's non-kinetic arsenal and when used effectively is a recognised combat multiplier.

*Information operations (IO) underpin all operational activities conducted by Defence.*¹²

Adaptive Campaigning – Army's Future Land Operations Concept is a capstone document that provides the framework for force modernisation and is guided by the intent of the White Paper. *Adaptive Campaigning* seeks to generate effects in the modern complex operational environment, via the use of five lines of operations, being: joint land combat, population protection, information actions, population support and indigenous capacity building.

The functional analysis within *Adaptive Campaigning* details that information operations conducted by Army within the tactical and operational sphere are known as 'information actions', with PSYOPS being one of the twelve information action 'tools'. Information actions inform and shape the perceptions, attitudes, behaviour and understanding of target population groups and assure the quality of our own information while attempting to disrupt or dislocate enemy command capabilities.¹³

*Information Actions underpin every element of Adaptive Campaigning and are an essential prerequisite for success.*¹⁴

The importance that the 2009 Defence White Paper and *Adaptive Campaigning* either directly or indirectly place upon information operations and information actions indicates that the PSYOPS capability, as one of the key elements or tools,¹⁵ needs to evolve. But the PSYOPS capability cannot move forward in isolation. A holistic approach must be considered in order to synchronise all the information operations elements and information actions tools already available within the ADF, from the tactical through to the strategic levels of operations.

FUTURE OF THE PSYOPS CAPABILITY

It is important to reemphasise that the intent of this article is to analyse the PSYOPS capability and its position within Australian Intelligence Corps. It is not addressing information operations or information actions within the ADF. Nevertheless, the proposed future of PSYOPS is inextricably linked to all other ADF capabilities that aim to shape and influence target audiences. Therefore, the proposed course of action (COA) for the future of PSYOPS within the ADF (detailed below in Table 1) also considers other ADF shaping and influence tools, albeit fleetingly.

As identified, a change in the PSYOPS capability sponsor is clearly needed in order to meet the demands of the 2009 Defence White Paper and *Adaptive Campaigning's* intent.

Furthermore, depending upon where the PSYOPS capability will ultimately reside within the ADF, the requirement to raise, train and sustain the PSYOPS capability will determine its structure with regards to composition, manning and resources, just to name a few. The courses of action identified in Table 1 are amplified below.

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**COA 1. PSYOPS, ALONG WITH ALL THE INFORMATION ACTION TOOLS/
INFORMATION OPERATIONS ASSETS, BECOMES A TRI-SERVICE CAPABILITY,
EMPLOYING SPECIALISTS TRAINED FROM ALL CORPS/SERVICES.**

It is envisaged that COA 1 is the most holistic course of action but would require a significant timeframe to develop and replace the current tactical capability. It will require a complete rethink with regard to the role of PSYOPS and the other eleven information actions tools within the ADF, supporting tactical, operational and/or strategic level intent. It is, however, not without precedent within the ABCA community. The Canadian Armed Forces (Land) have raised a regular

Table 1. Courses of action for the employment of the PSYOPS capability within the ADF

	COA 1	COA 2	COA 3	COA 4
Capability Owner	VCDF Group	Army Group	Army Group	Army – Aust Int Corps
Manning	Tri-Service	Tri-Service	Army – All Corps	Army – All Corps
Unit Home	Joint Capability Coordination Division	Army – Forces Command (proposed Information Actions Bn)	Army – Special Operations Command	Army – Forces Command (1 Int Bn)
Recommended Composition of future PSYOPS teams	1 x Comd – Tri-Service 1 x 2IC – Aust Int Corps 2 x MMT – Engr Corps 1 x Analyst – Tri-Service 1 x Production – Tri-Service 2 x Disseminator – Tri-Service	1 x Comd – Tri-Service 1 x 2IC – Aust Int Corps 2 x MMT – Engr Corps 1 x Analyst – Aust Int Corps 2 x Disseminator – Tri-Service	1 x Comd – Aust Int Corps 1 x 2IC – Aust Int Corps 2 x MMT – Engr Corps 2 x Disseminator – Arms Corps	1 x Comd – Aust Int Corps 1 x 2IC – Aust Int Corps 2 x MMT – Engr Corps 2 x Disseminator – Arms Corps

PSYOPS capability (Bn) from a small reserve component (Coy -) within the past six years.¹⁶

COA 2. PSYOPS REMAIN AN ARMY CAPABILITY, BECOMING A CAPABILITY OUTSIDE OF THE AUSTRALIAN INTELLIGENCE CORPS, EMPLOYING SPECIALISTS FROM ALL THREE SERVICES.

COA 2 would result in the potential re-raising of the 1st Psychological Operations Unit (1 POU). As this article has demonstrated, PSYOPS is neither intelligence nor operations, but rather an intelligence-driven, non-kinetic, shaping and influencing

capability. Given its unique nature, it does not fit well into existing command structures, and as such consideration should be given to creating a unit specifically for the capability. This also is not without precedence; during the Vietnam War, Army formed 1 POU. This course of action would see this unit re-raised, commanded directly by Forces Command. The re-raised 1 POU could be manned by tri-service personnel, with the bulk of the analytical expertise driven by the Australian Intelligence Corps upon which the success of the ADF's PSYOPS capability has been based.¹⁷

COA 3. PSYOPS REMAIN AN ARMY CAPABILITY, MANAGED BY SPECIAL OPERATIONS COMMAND, EMPLOYING SPECIALISTS TRAINED FROM THE ALL CORPS ENVIRONMENT

COA 3 models itself on the US PSYOPS construct. A potential downside of this course of action is that the conventional Army's access to a PSYOPS capability may be constrained by Special Forces ownership and therefore may not support the Army's overarching information operations effect.

The conventional Army has specific paradigms that can limit PSYOPS nuances and thus its ability to employ the PSYOPS capability to its full effect. Too often the conventional Army applies the 'hearts and minds' methodology as opposed to a capability that can be divisive, achieving lethal effects. Special Forces are not as constrained by this mindset, and are therefore likely to employ the PSYOPS capability, or a component of it, to its full potential (as per the US model).¹⁸ This is particularly evident with regard to counter-leadership targeting and the more sensitive Grey and Black categories of PSYOPS.

The US PSYOPS capability, now referred to as Military Information Support Group,¹⁹ is within Special Operations Command, allowing it to be resourced and employed in a dynamic nature—making full use of assets, targeted audiences, and an open and less restrictive mindset.

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COA 4. PSYOPS REMAIN AN ARMY CAPABILITY, MANAGED BY THE AUSTRALIAN INTELLIGENCE CORPS, EMPLOYING SPECIALISTS TRAINED FROM THE ALL CORPS ENVIRONMENT

COA 4 is the least disruptive though worst long-term outcome for the PSYOPS capability. In this scenario it is possible the capability could remain stagnant, receiving limited resources, manning and forethought from Australian Intelligence

Corps. It would continue to play second fiddle to the Australian Intelligence Corps' core function of providing military intelligence to identify and inform the commander of the threat.

The employment of all corps personnel within the capability will assist Australian Intelligence Corps redistribute personnel to other core Australian Intelligence Corps functions, though not to the degree of COA 2. Despite PSYOPS not being an intelligence function, PSYOPS skill-sets use intelligence processes and methodologies, particularly with regard to battlespace analysis concerning human and information terrain, and hostile PSYOPS (propaganda) analysis.

CONCLUSION

PSYOPS is not an intelligence function. It does not need to remain within the Australian Intelligence Corps. Nor does it have an ISTAR function.

The uneasy acceptance of PSYOPS and competing priorities faced by the Australian Intelligence Corps has meant that the development of the PSYOPS capability has lacked attention in recent years. Without significant changes to its command and control, force composition and internal architecture, the PSYOPS capability is likely to remain stagnant, leaving the Army and the ADF with a second rate information actions capability. Therefore, it is recommended that the PSYOPS capability be removed from the Australian Intelligence Corps and placed within the tri-service environment or Special Operations Command (COA 1 and COA 3 respectively).

Regardless of which direction the PSYOPS capability goes, it must, and almost certainly will, remain within the ADF's non-kinetic arsenal.

ENDNOTES

- 1 FMFM1 – *Warfighting*, United States Marine Corps, 1989, chapter 1, p. 3.
- 2 LWD 1 – *The Fundamentals of Land Warfare*, Department of Defence, 2008, chapter 1.
- 3 Macquarie Dictionary Australia website <<http://www.macquariedictionary.com.au/>> accessed 19 May 2011.
- 4 Australian Army – Defence Jobs website <<http://www.defencejobs.gov.au/army/jobs/intelligenceCorpsOfficer/>> accessed 15 February 2012.
- 5 De La Salle University website, <<http://www.dlsu.edu.ph/offices/osa/rotc/pdf/ms1/military-intelligence.pdf>> accessed 15 February 2012.
- 6 Ibid.
- 7 Defence iQ website, <<http://www.defenceiq.com/glossary/military-intelligence/>> accessed 15 February 2012.
- 8 *Adaptive Campaigning 09 – Army's Future Land Operating Concept*, Department of Defence, 2009, p. 5.

- 9 US Army Special Operations Command website <<http://www.soc.mil/>> accessed 15 February 2012; and US Army Civil Affairs and Psychological Operations Command (Airborne), <<http://www.usacapoc.army.mil/>> accessed 15 February 2012. UK Ministry of Defence website <<http://www.army.mod.uk/intelligence/role/default.aspx>> accessed 15 February 2012. The Department of National Defence and the Canadian Forces website <http://armyapp.forces.gc.ca/pstc-cfsp/coe_psyops-eng.asp> accessed 15 February 2012.
- 10 *Defending Australia in the Asia Pacific Century: Force 2030*, Defence White Paper, Department of Defence, 2009, p. 77.
- 11 ADDP 3.13 – *Information Operations*, Department of Defence, 2006.
- 12 Ibid, chapter 1.
- 13 *Adaptive Campaigning 09 – Army’s Future Land Operating Concept*, Department of Defence, 2009, Glossary.
- 14 Ibid, p. 50.
- 15 PSYOPS is an ‘element’ of information operations and a ‘tool’ of information actions.
- 16 Lieutenant Colonel MK Purcell, Canadian Forces College, JCSP 33: *Core Requirements for the Successful Development of a Psychological Operations Capability for the Canadian Forces*, 2007.
- 17 Warrant Officer Class Two Justin Tomlinson, ‘The Future of Psychological Operations within the Adaptive Campaign Construct’, unpublished essay, 2010.
- 18 US Army Special Operations Command website <<http://www.soc.mil/>> accessed 16 February 2012.
- 19 Ibid.

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