

Tactical Information Operations in Kosovo

Major Marc J. Romanych, U.S. Army, Retired, and
Lieutenant Colonel Kenneth Krumm, U.S. Army

INFORMATION OPERATIONS (IO) are the employment of the core capabilities of electronic warfare, computer network operations, psychological operations (PSYOP), military deception, and operations security, along with specified supporting and related capabilities, to affect or defend information and information systems, and to influence decision-making.¹ Information operations are enabling operations that support offensive and defensive operations, stability operations, and support operations. Consequently, they are primarily shaping operations that create and preserve opportunities for decisive operations. Information operations are a key component of the commander's effort to achieve information superiority, which is an operational advantage derived from the ability to collect, process, and disseminate an uninterrupted flow of information while exploiting or denying the adversary's ability to do the same.²

In support of the Multi-National Brigade—East MNB(E) peacekeeping mission in Kosovo, the Army conducted information operations to affect the flow and content of information in the area of responsibility (AOR) and achieved information superiority by disseminating timely, truthful information to key local leaders and populace groups. The operational advantage gained by information superiority was the local populace's support for MNB(E) operations.³

The Operating Environment

The situation in Kosovo presented a challenge to the international community (IC). The UN Interim Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) and NATO's Kosovo Force (KFOR) were faced with the absence of an effective, central government. Without state institutions, Kosovo's two primary ethnic groups—Albanians and Serbs—developed parallel but sepa-

rate societies, each with its own institutions. These two societies were in direct conflict with each other along "ethnic fault lines," which were geographic areas where both ethnic groups separately existed but came into direct and often hostile contact. Extremist elements frequently used the friction created along such fault lines to instigate interethnic violence and to threaten Kosovo's fragile peace. The irreconcilable differences between these two societies affected every aspect of UNMIK's civilian and KFOR's military missions.

Within MNB(E)'s AOR, the populace was approximately 90 percent Albanian (around 400,000 people) and 10 percent Serb (perhaps 20,000 people). Kosovo's Albanians and Serbs had quite different perceptions of reality, particularly in regard to each other. For example, Albanians saw all Serbs as aggressors, occupiers, and war criminals who deliberately sought a greater Serbia. Kosovar-Albanians asserted that independence was the only possible solution to their problems.

For their part, Serbs saw Albanians as enemies who wanted to create a greater Albania at the expense of the Serbs. The Serbs claimed Albanians were criminals and terrorists responsible for civil war and intent on expelling all Serbs from Kosovo. Kosovar-Serbs wanted Kosovo to return to direct Serbian government control. Each group claimed victim status at the hands of the other, and both groups believed they had been unjustly persecuted in recent history.⁴ These beliefs manifested themselves in various ways, from nationalistic rhetoric and propaganda to ethnic intimidation and even violence.

Without a functioning government, Albanians and Serbs relied on societal institutions to provide structure and direction. Political, religious, and criminal organizations served as a form of command and control for the populace. To influence the populace,

UNMIK and KFOR had to influence Albanian and Serb organizations and the individuals and groups within them. Depending on the extent and character of their influence, these individuals and groups were either supportive of or threatening to MNB(E)'s mission.

To further complicate the matter, neither Albanian nor Serbian societies were monolithic entities. Kosovo's Albanian society was individualistic and decentralized. At the local level, family relationships dominated formal and informal power structures. At the municipal and provincial levels, political, paramilitary, and organized crime organizations were influential. On the other hand, Kosovo's Serbian society was collectivist or centralized. Concentrated into ethnic enclaves, the populace lacked any formal structure other than the Serbian Orthodox Church.

Serbian and Albanian factions competed for control of their respective communities and, in the case of the Albanians, for the entire province as well. Armed Albanian insurgent groups, supported by extremist elements within Kosovo, desired to expand Kosovo's current boundaries to the east and south. The factionalism produced a complex, multidimensional operating environment.

Information was an important part of KFOR's operating environment, and the most significant characteristic of the information environment was people. Conceptually, Kosovo's populace (both Albanian and Serb) was considered the information environment's key terrain; that is, an entity the control of which afforded a marked advantage to either IC (that is, UNMIK and KFOR) or Albanian and Serb factions. The presence of the international community restrained Albanian and Serb factions and compelled them to compete in the information environment rather than on the battlefield.

Each faction used information to build legitimacy and power by shaping the populace's perceptions and attitudes. This information conflict was a three-



US and Russian soldiers block an angry mob waving the Albanian flag, Domorovce, Kosovo, 14 August 2000. After two Serbian men disappeared, Serbians believed Albanians abducted the men and began to make threats and block roads. The Albanians then began to form a mob to confront the Serbians.

US Army

way struggle among the IC, Albanians, and Serbs. To accomplish the mission, UNMIK and KFOR had to gain and maintain support of the populace.

Other important characteristics of the information environment that affected KFOR's mission were the dilapidated state of Kosovo's information infrastructure (for example, the power grid and public telephone system) and the media's biased reporting, which was either pro-Albanian or pro-Serb. Most of Kosovo's information environment was not under the IC's direct control, which limited UNMIK's and KFOR's abilities to communicate with the populace.

MNB(E) Operations

The MNB(E)'s mission was to maintain a safe, secure environment. Its AOR, in the southeast corner of Kosovo, was some 30 kilometers wide and 80 kilometers long, or approximately 2,300 square kilometers. The AOR was subdivided into six battalion task force (TF) sectors, three of which were U.S.-supervised and three multinational (Russian, Greek, and Polish-Ukrainian).

To provide a safe, secure environment, MNB(E) planned and executed tactical operations within a framework of maneuver, civil-military, and information operations. Because the populace and KFOR troops resided in the physical environment (vice the



U.S. soldiers question an Albanian family during a cordon and search mission, Crnilo, Kosovo, August 2000.

information environment), maneuver operations were decisive, and information operations supported them.

Maneuver operations controlled the AOR through troop presence and noncombat activities. Troop presence included manning fixed sites to guard Serb enclaves and patrimonial sites; establishing checkpoints to control populace activity and flow; and patrolling to demonstrate commitment and resolve. Noncombat operations included cordons and searches to seize weapons caches; reconnaissance and surveillance to guide future operations; and security operations to control the AOR's boundaries. Much of MNB(E)'s maneuver elements' attention and effort was fixed on ethnic faultline activity and boundary operations. The constraint to use lethal force only in self-defense and the need to remain impartial governed maneuver operations.

Civil-military operations provided humanitarian and civic assistance to gain and maintain the support of the populace and support maneuver operations by directing resources and aid to cooperative populace groups. Such aid included humanitarian assistance, infrastructure rehabilitation, short-term employment projects, school visits, and medical assistance programs. Civil-military operations were a positive, tangible means of influencing the populace.

To gain information superiority, MNB(E) had to maintain credibility with the populace and quickly dis-

seminate truthful, factual information. By doing so, MNB(E) retained the moral high ground within the information environment, ensuring legitimacy for its forces and activities. Both offensive and defensive information operations activities accomplished this. Offensively, MNB (E) leaders and soldiers engaged key Albanian and Serb leaders (organization decisionmakers) and discrete population groups, such as communities near ethnic faultlines. Truthful information was also disseminated to target audiences to influence certain segments of the populace. All information operations were integrated and synchronized with civil-military and nonlethal maneuver operations.

Defensively, information operations protected MNB(E)'s intentions and freedom of operation by countering misinformation and propaganda, particularly that disseminated through local and regional media. By actively disseminating MNB(E)'s point of view regarding critical events and issues in the AOR, information operations limited and, as possible, neutralized the effects of inflammatory rhetoric and anti-UNMIK and KFOR propaganda. Operations security supported this effort by denying specific forewarning of MNB(E) intentions.

Information operations activities were organized into two synchronized operations: one to shape the operating environment for future operations; the other to provide direct support to battalion TFs. The primary difference between these two operations was timing and intended effects. Both used the same assets and means, and both sought to modify the populace's perceptions, attitudes, and behavior.

The shaping operation was analogous to the deep battle in conventional conflict. MNB(E) targeted key Albanian and Serb leaders and influential populace groups throughout the AOR to modify attitudes and behavior well before a critical event occurred. For example, during the campaigning phase of provincial elections, MNB(E) personnel engaged key political leaders in face-to-face meetings to avoid political violence.

Information operations support to the battalion TFs was analogous to the close battle. In reaction to events unfolding in the AOR, the MNB(E) allocated IO-capable assets to maneuver elements, and battalion TFs engaged local leaders and the populace. For example, grenade attacks and house bombings near an ethnic faultline could result in face-to-face meetings with local leaders, distribution of PSYOP handbills to local residents, and increased patrols—all intended to prevent the continuance or renewal of violence.

Information Operations Capabilities

MNB(E) operations were constrained to non-lethal means. To support maneuver operations, MNB(E) employed tactical PSYOP teams, a public affairs detachment, civil affairs (CA) tactical support teams, combat camera teams, medical treatment teams, unit commanders, and unit patrols. These dissimilar IO assets used disparate means, such as PSYOP loudspeaker operations and handbills; radio broadcasts; press releases and media events; medical assistance programs; reconstruction and short-term employment projects; face-to-face meetings; and force presence. The challenge of information operations was to translate these means into focused capabilities that fulfilled the commander's intent.

MNB(E)'s primary IO-capable assets were—

- A PSYOP company, which focused on influencing the attitudes, perceptions, and behavior of Kosovo's indigenous populace. Tactical PSYOP teams conducted loudspeaker operations and face-to-face and other direct PSYOP product dissemination. The company's PSYOP dissemination detachment produced handbills, posters, and other print products as well as radio and TV programming.

- A CA battalion, which, in support of information operations, directed resources and activities to gain and maintain the support of local leaders and populations. Tactical support teams coordinated civil and humanitarian assistance, performed population assessments, and conducted face-to-face meetings with local leaders, populace groups, and international organizations.

- A mobile public affairs detachment (MPAD), which facilitated media operations and produced internal information products. The public affairs officer (PAO) publicized KFOR's position and countered misinformation through local and international media by press releases, media events, and press conferences. For each information operation, the PAO released information and provided information opportunities for media sources popular with the intended target audience.

- Medical units, whose personnel provided medical and dental care to communities in the AOR to influence the attitudes and behavior of local leaders and the populace. Criteria for providing medical care included need as well as the attitude and behavior of the populace.

- Combat camera teams, which documented activities and events for exploitation by PSYOP and public affairs and provided direct support to battalion TFs during potentially confrontational

activities such as cordons and searches.

- Command and staff elements, who engaged key civil, political, and religious leaders in face-to-face meetings to influence their attitudes and behavior and gauge their opinions. Senior leaders also engaged population groups during town meetings, public gatherings, and media opportunities such as radio talk shows.

- Maneuver units, whose tasks varied according to each unit's organic assets and the troop-contributing nations' policies. Battalion commanders and staff engaged municipal leaders; company commanders engaged local village leaders. Junior leaders and soldiers disseminated messages to local leaders and the populace during the conduct of daily missions. Force presence demonstrated KFOR resolve and eased ethnic tensions.

The Information Operations Staff Section

The MNB(E) information operations staff section was part of the G3 staff. The head of the section served as the MNB(E) information operations officer, or information operations coordinator and was the primary staff proponent for all IO activities. Assisting the IO officer were a planner and an operations officer, a target analyst, and a noncommissioned officer. The primary functions of the IO staff section were to plan; coordinate; integrate and synchronize; and monitor execution of the information operation.

Plan. Information operations are integral to the overall operation, not separate or parallel operations. As such, information operations were planned using the same processes the MNB(E) battle staff used—the military decisionmaking process (MDMP), intelligence preparation of the battlefield (IPB), and targeting.

The base intelligence document for IO planning was a current IPB of the information environment—a specialized application of IPB that followed the process outlined in Field Manual (FM) 34-130, *Intelligence Preparation of the Battlefield*.⁵ The information-focused IPB defined the information environment in MNB(E)'s AOR, determined its effects on operations, evaluated the information threat, and determined how that threat would attempt to use information to attain its objectives.⁶

The IO staff section developed and maintained the information IPB, but the MNB(E) validated it. MNB(E) used the targeting process to focus non-lethal maneuver and civil-military and IO-capable assets into an operation that shaped the environment



US Army

Pennsylvania Guardsmen talk with a school principal in Gonji Livocto, Kosovo, to find out how many of the school's children are Serbian, 23 September 2003. The school teaches both Serbian and Albanian children, but the majority of students are Albanian.

for future operations. Procedurally, the process followed the decide, detect, deliver, and assess methodology in FM 6-20-10, *Tactics, Techniques, and Procedures for the Targeting Process*.⁷ However, to integrate MNB(E)'s various and nonlethal assets and means into a cohesive effort, the process expanded to include nonlethal targeting objectives (reduce, minimize, increase) and effects (inform, influence, warn, co-opt). Each targeting cycle produced a target synchronization matrix that directed nonlethal engagement of key leaders and populace groups.⁸ The fire support element led the targeting effort.

Coordinate. MNB(E)'s information operations staff was the focal point for information operations. Day-to-day IO activities were coordinated within the command group, battle staff, and subordinate units in regularly scheduled staff meetings or by direct staff coordination. An IO working group served as a forum for the IO staff to monitor and coordinate the information operations of MNB(E)-level assets and subordinate battalions TFs. Meeting attendees included the IO staff, battalion TF information operations officers, and representatives from G2, G3, command surgeon, combat camera, MPAD, G5, and PSYOP sections.⁹

Integrate and synchronize. Information operations were integrated into the maneuver plan through the MDMP and targeting process. At the MNB(E) level, this was the IO staff section's

responsibility. The IO section also synchronized the MNB(E) information operation with the information activities of KFOR, UNMIK, and the adjacent Multi-National Brigade. At the battalion TFs, information operations integration and synchronization was the responsibility of the IO officer. Synchronization of the various assets in sector included not only organic TF assets, but also MNB(E) assets such as civil affairs, PSYOP, combat camera, and medical teams operating in the TF sector.

Monitor execution. MNB(E) directed information operations through execution, target synchronization matrixes (TSMs), and battle drills. Depending on the tempo of operations, TSMs were issued either weekly or every other week. The TSMs coordinated IO activities across the AOR by assigning a task and purpose to each MNB(E) asset (PSYOP, CA, and public affairs) and the subordinate battalion TFs. The activities directed by the TSM shaped the operating environment through nonlethal engagement of specific leaders and population groups. In response to unplanned critical events that occurred in the AOR, such as a violent demonstration or act of violence against KFOR soldiers, the IO staff used battle drills to plan and rapidly coordinate employment of IO-capable assets. Each drill included a proposed IO concept of employment, a desired end state, and generic tasks to those assets the MNB(E) commander normally em-

loys. During crisis-action planning, the commander and staff refined the concept and tasks to address the situation at hand.

Assessment

Assessing information operations during peace operations was a challenge. Without quantifiable physical evidence, IO effects were subtle—a target audience’s response or nonresponse, changes in efforts and techniques, or an absence of activity. Information operations effects also manifested as trends, activities, and patterns in the operational environment. Overcoming these imprecise effects required a thorough understanding of the operating environment.

The effectiveness of MNB(E)’s information operation was determined by analyzing trends within the AOR, unit assessment reporting, and media reporting. Trend analysis data from unit intelligence summaries and operations reports identified, evaluated, and categorized incidents as either negative or positive. Negative incidents were those that were counter to a safe, secure environment, such as interethnic violence, anti-KFOR propaganda, and populace interference with UNMIK and KFOR activities. Positive incidents were those that supported the KFOR mission. Examples included interethnic cooperation or observance of the rule of law. The occurrence of these incidents was tracked to determine trends by time, ethnicity, and geographic location.

Unit assessments analyzed the information environment in the TF sectors and the IO effects on the target audiences. Daily and weekly reporting of battalion TFs, CA battalions, and PSYOP detachments presented a detailed assessment of the entire AOR.

The IO staff section, with the MPAD and G2,

conducted a weekly analysis of local and regional media reporting. The analysis examined media reporting of events in the AOR to identified subject matter broadcast to the populace and to detect propaganda directed against segments of the populace and KFOR. The staff assessed media reports as positive; neutral; or negative and factual; or non-factual. A summary of the results helped determine the main topics and themes Kosovo’s Albanian and Serbian media disseminated.

As part of MNB(E), the 1st Armored Division (1AD), employed tactical information operations from June 2000 to May 2001 during Operation Joint Guardian in Kosovo. Based on existing doctrine and tactics, techniques, and procedures (TTP), the 1AD used information operations to shape the perceptions, attitudes, and behavior of the adversary and the populace in the AOR.

The 1AD’s experience in Kosovo confirmed the value of information operations to peace operations. The MNB(E)’s information operations successfully shaped the environment for its day-to-day operations and defused several potentially volatile situations. Success was possible because the MNB(E) integrated information operations into the overall mission instead of regarding them as separate, parallel operations. Building on the previous experiences of U.S. forces in the Balkans, the 1AD expanded and refined existing information operations TTP to include integration and synchronization of information operations within the maneuver operation. Using standard processes—the MDMP, IPB, and targeting—the IO staff visualized Kosovo’s information environment and developed a focused, integrated operation to shape the operating environment and support battalion TF efforts to maintain public safety and security. **MR**

NOTES

1. U.S. Army Field Manual (FM) 3-13, *Information Operations: Doctrine, Tactics, Techniques, and Procedures* (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office [GPO], 28 November 2003), 1-13.
 2. FM 3-0, *Operations* (Washington, DC: GPO, 14 June 2001), 11-2.
 3. Steven M. Seybert, "Shaping the Environment for Future Operations: Experiences with Information Operations in Kosovo" in *Lessons from Kosovo: The KFOR Experience*, ed. Larry K. Wentz, Department of Defense (DOD) Command and Control Research Program Publication Series, Center for Advanced Concepts and Technology, Assistant Secretary of Defense (C3I), DOD, Washington, D.C., July 2002.
 4. Drita Perezic, "Kosovo Primer," unpublished manuscript, New York, March 2001.
 5. FM 34-130, *Intelligence Preparation of the Battlefield* (Washington, DC: GPO, 8

July 1994).
 6. LTC David C. Grohoski and MAJ Marc J. Romanych, "Templating the Information Threat," *Cyber Sword: The Professional Journal of Joint Information Operations* (Summer 2001): 5-8.
 7. FM 6-20-10, *Tactics, Techniques, and Procedures for the Targeting Process* (Washington, DC: GPO, 8 May 1996).
 8. CWO2 Richard L. Gonzales and MAJ Marc J. Romanych, "Nonlethal Targeting Revisited," *Field Artillery* (May-June 2001): 6-10.
 9. Each battalion TF in MNB(E) had an IO officer. In U.S. Army battalions, the fire support officer generally filled the IO position. In non-U.S. battalions, the IO officer was usually an officer on the operations staff.

Major Marc J. Romanych, U.S. Army, Retired, works for JBM, Inc., contracted to the U.S. Army 1st Information Operations Command. He received a B.A. from Syracuse University, a B.A. from the University of Maryland, and an M.A. from St. Mary's University of San Antonio. He has served in various command and staff positions in the continental United States, Bosnia, Kosovo, and Iraq.

LTC Kenneth M. Krumm, U.S. Army, is assigned to the Combined Arms Center G7 Information Operations Office and serves as the U.S. Army IO Specified Proponent. He received a B.A. from Northern State University, an M.A. from Webster University, and he is a graduate of the U.S. Army Command and General Staff College.