Interagency Dialogue Premiere

JFQ is pleased to announce an important new series — *Interagency Dialogue*. With each issue of *JFQ* will supply articles on topics of interest to those who conduct integrated interagency operations and coordinate among Federal and local government agencies and organizations. The goal of this section is to stimulate thought and debate on a wide range of security issues that cut across agency stovepipes within the Federal Government and between the Department of Defense, local government agencies, first responders, and a multitude of agencies in allied governments. This essay is on a controversial topic, strategic communications. It was written by Jeffrey Jones, recently a Bush administration National Security Council member and retired U.S. Army colonel. *JFQ* encourages your feedback or essays on security matters that involve interagency and all the instruments of national power for this featured section. Please see the NDU Press Web site for feedback or information on submissions: **ndupress.ndu.edu**.

Strategic Communication
A Mandate for the United States

By JEFFREY B. JONES

In an era when the power of information affects every human being in matters mundane and transcendent, individual and social, national and international—when images are transmitted instantaneously worldwide, radio programs are translated into hundreds of languages and broadcast to every corner of the earth, and periodicals and the Internet are universal communications media—there is no alternative but to harness information to protect and promote national interests.[1]
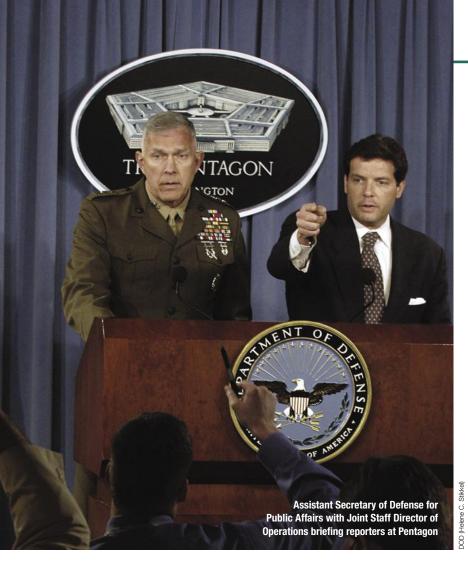
The Mandate

As a subset of the national security strategy, there is a need for a national communications strategy coequal with the political strategy overseen by the Department of State, the economic strategy led by the National Security Council Office of International Economic Affairs, and the national military strategy implemented by the Secretary of Defense and the uniformed military. The national communications strategy should provide objectives and guidance for both regional and transnational issues. A mechanism to coordinate all interagency informational efforts at the national level is essential to its success. The forum should meet routinely, not just in times of crisis.

This call for a national communications strategy is not an argument for a propaganda minister, but for better coordination of information efforts among agencies. The information war must be waged during peacetime, crisis, operations other than war, war itself, and in the post-conflict period. It should shape the informational and intellectual environment long before hostilities. The effort is not restricted to the White House Office of Global Communications or to interagency spokesmen, press officers, information warriors, or technological innovations that are shaping the digitized battlefield; it must include the public diplomacy activities of the Department of State as well as the full spectrum of global activities of the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) and other agencies.

In reality, we are talking about *strategic communication*—the synchronized coordination of

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Assistant Secretary of Defense for Public Affairs with Joint Staff Director of Operations briefing reporters at Pentagon

DOD (Helene C. Stikkel)

statecraft, public affairs, public diplomacy, military information operations, and other activities, *reinforced by political, economic, military, and other actions*, to advance U.S. foreign policy objectives. To date, the predominant concern has been for reaching domestic audiences through public affairs and dealing with U.S. and Western media and the 24-hour news cycle, with our public diplomacy efforts severely constrained by the disestablishment of the U.S. Information Agency some years ago, and the reality that we have had chronic resource insufficiency across the strategic communication domain. As Joseph Nye points out, to get America's message across, we need assurance, positive actions and examples, persuasion, moral suasion, and other inducements as much as we need deterrence, dissuasion, and coercion.[2]

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Using information also requires coordination with the information efforts of allies, friends, and former adversaries. Further, it demands constant multi-agency, multiservice, multidisciplinary, and multidimensional integration as well as orches-tration, choreography, and synergy. This article deals with the use of information to affect attitudinal and behavioral change (the nonlinear and intellectual fourth dimension) and the mandate for successful communications with first wave (agrarian), second wave (industrialized), and what Alvin and Heidi Toffler call the post-industrial third wave of societies.[3] The following factors impact today's informational environment:

■ Traditional dividing lines between public affairs, public diplomacy, and military information operations are blurred because of immediate access to information. Domestic press announcements are broadcast and monitored globally, and they influence as well as inform. Reports and examples of focused, tactical U.S. psychological operations (PSYOP)—all truthful but designed expressly to influence foreign attitudes and behavior—are also available in this country on the Internet. Each is important and designed for specific audiences. None is preeminent. Synergy is impossible without coordination. The information activities of other government agencies are distinct, although some of the means may be the same.

■ Resources dedicated to the information realm, which some would argue is the most critical element of national power, have been estimated to be insufficient by a factor of ten.

■ There is extensive proliferation of animosity, alienation of allies, disappointment of friends, and disillusionment of those who have traditionally looked to a trusted America for hope.

■ Technological innovations exist but are insufficiently funded, tapped, or fused. The Joint Staff's information management portal, conceived during operations in Afghanistan, is only now coming to fruition. Integration with unclassified systems at the State Department remains an unfulfilled requirement.

■ Bureaucratic turf battles, misperceptions, and the absence of visible, sustained interagency commitment are detriments to progress.

■ Al Qaeda and other parties constitute an active adversary in the propaganda domain. What previously existed in the training camps of Afghanistan is now on the Internet. Months ago, Abu Musab al Zarqawi's terrorist group released a CD–ROM urging Muslims to battle against Coalition "crusaders" in Iraq, and others have followed. That is not an argument to engage in propaganda; for the United States, truthful information is the best antidote and is exactly what its public affairs, public diplomacy, and information operators seek to provide.

■ Policy issues that dominate the "hierarchy of hatred" against the United States, such as the Middle East peace process, remain unresolved. With increased and balanced U.S. pressure on both sides, and sustained engagement, some progress is being made. But as the United Nations *Arab Human Development Report* recently underscored, we are not the only guilty party, despite accusations to the contrary.

■ From the highest levels of government, there is growing overreliance on non–face-to-face communications that do not convey national seriousness of

Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice arriving at Darfur, Sudan, during African Union Mission

U.S. Air Force (Bradley C. Church)

purpose or even interest in allied opinion. Perceptions become reality in the mind.

■ Our national ability to use television and the Internet in sophisticated ways to reach the full spectrum of audiences remains woefully inadequate if we are to influence the future.

■ There is a mandate to apply the lessons of the past, positive and negative: organizational, technological, planning; education and training; phasing; interagency, joint, and coalition; strategic, operational, and tactical.

The Requirements

At this point, as the Tofflers point out in *War and Anti-War,* there is no overarching knowledge or information strategy at the *national level*, nor is there a focused and effective mechanism for coordinating dissemination to all prospective audiences around the world—allied, friendly, neutral, potentially hostile, and hostile. While the U.S. Information Agency had the predominant responsibility for public diplomacy until it was disestablished, national assets for communication, information, and education around the globe have degraded, and other actors and key communicators are now involved. There is little evidence of cooperation, coordination, or even appreciation for the impact of strategic communication. Thus, there is a need for a permanent mechanism to coordinate as well as implement and monitor all interagency information efforts. Several attempts have been made over the last 4 years, but none have been effectively institutionalized in a national security Presidential directive, which is needed to add discipline, guidance, and direction as well as to monitor implementation.

This is a requirement in peacetime, as well as during crises, conflicts, and post-conflict operations. Members of such an interagency structure would also work together to implement strategic information plans proposed by the affected geographic Combatant Commanders to both the Secretary of Defense and Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff who would provide these requests for interagency support such as was executed so successfully during Operation *Uphold Democracy* in Haiti.

At the *theater level*, each combatant commander has a theater security cooperation plan, which should include senior leader engagement, international military education and training, security assistance, pervasive use of DOD-sponsored regional security studies centers, peacetime PSYOP programs, and, ideally, a theater information strategy derived from the national communication strategy. All elements of the plan should be designed to help achieve political, economic, and military objectives for the region. Coordination mechanisms include elements of the combatant command staff (operations, intelligence, strategy and plans, public affairs, strategic communications, information operations, PSYOP, and Civil Affairs and the Staff Judge Advocate), U.S. Embassies (foreign policy, intelligence, State Department public diplomacy affairs, Defense Attaches, and regionally oriented USAID advisers) and, to the extent possible, allied representatives. Each combatant command should draft a theater information strategy concentrating on proactive, influential, and shaping (rather than reactive) efforts to reduce sources of conflict; assistance to nations in their transition to democratic systems; increasing dialogue by building political, economic, military, medical, commercial, social, and educational bridges; development of collaborative approaches to regional problems; reduction of the motivation and perceived legitimacy of those who possess nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction; and emphasis on the correct role of the military in a democracy, including constructive domestic uses.

These same advisers would meet regularly to coordinate their respective efforts with those at the interagency level, channeled through the DOD-led/J–39 Battle Update Brief apparatus to maximize the informational impact throughout the region and implement the agreed strategy. As a matter of course, strategic communication plans would be integrated into operation, concept, and contingency plans in much the same way as we have incorporated flexible deterrent

options. Finally, when problems arise and contingency planning commences, a theater-wide strategic communication supporting plan must be developed and implemented. Every effort must be made to "informationally" prepare the battlespace (Phase 0) to defuse, deter, or contain the conflict. Combatant commanders should submit their requests for interagency consideration in terms of encouraging multinational organizations such as the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, Organization of American States, and Association of Southeast Asian Nations to participate in developing and implementing such an information strategy and to accept an increasing role. The George C. Marshall European Center for Security Studies and regional centers of National Defense University (Africa Center, Near East and South Asia Center, and Center for Hemispheric Defense Studies), which institutionalize the self-help process through sharing the ideas and experiences of Western democracies and their free market economies, could play an invaluable role as well. New centers of this type should be proposed to meet theater needs.

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At the *tactical level*, there are myriad applications for peacetime information use. Conveying information by all means available can enhance one's ability to see, hear, know, disrupt, deny, "out-communicate," and "out-think" the adversary. In addition, it can encourage dissension, defection, and surrender, thus ending the battle quickly and saving lives. Also at the tactical level, information must be used to help in the all-important multifaceted, multi-agency, and probably multinational efforts after the battle. Allies can be invaluable contributors to common goals and objectives as well as provide key conduits to enhance the effectiveness of our informational efforts.

Planning Across the Spectrum

In peacetime, strategic communication issues are both regional and transnational. The construct is more encompassing than yesterday's deterrence and dissuasion, although those remain central to national survival and our global interests. Given the U.S. reputation for unilateral action, with little (or at least perceived as insufficient) coordination and inclusion of allies, we need the following to ensure that we have enduring bridges of understanding: an effective and active strategy of *reassurance* for friends; *assurance* of our capacity and enduring commitment for potential adversaries; *persuasion* of friends, allies, adversaries, and neutrals; enhanced perceptions in terms of military and other presence; and two-way *education* and capacity enhancement programs at all levels. In addition, we need more effective human rights assistance, informational efforts to speed newly free countries on the road to democracy, humanitarian and disaster assistance, refugee and counterdrug operations, and full-spectrum information efforts in support of President George W. Bush's Proliferation Security Initiative.

An unfulfilled task from the administration's first term is the aforementioned need for a national communication strategy to drive the creation of cascading theater information strategies for each region, more comprehensive theater security cooperation plans, better coordination with U.S. Embassy Mission Performance Plans, robust information plans implementing each of the regional combating terrorism strategies, better allied capacity-building, and increased means of measuring strategic, operational, and tactical effectiveness. The Department of Defense needs to establish a comprehensive strategy for its role of supporting the State Department in public diplomacy, as well as more rational and responsive product and action approval authority.

In crises, there are again both regional and transnational requirements: tailored, non–order-of-battle intelligence requirements as well as a mandate for enhanced dissuasion, deterrence, deployment enhancement, perceptions of presence, prepositioning, interagency cross-fertilization, and accessing broader coalition assistance and cooperation. As requested but denied in Rwanda, there may be opportunities for information intervention (U.S./allies/UN) to counter the genocidal encouragement from such entities as hostile radio broadcasts. Strategic communication and information planning accelerators are needed as well as enhanced capacity for technological reachback, tempered with the enduring requirement for physical presence to assess ground truth and the resonance of our messages. We need to develop or take better advantage of other conduits for our messages, especially those with proven or likely resonance.

Just as in peacetime, as crises escalate, we must better understand that our actions—political, economic, or military—convey messages more loudly than rhetoric, but that both are important

and neither in isolation is a panacea. While there are indeed strategic, operational, and tactical measures of effectiveness, there must be organizational elements dedicated to tracking them and providing feedback to information planners at all levels. A more rational and responsive product/action approval process is needed that prescribes authorities down to the lowest level. Earlier information as well as intelligence preparation of the battlespace is required. There must be better analytic, human factor, perceptional, and environmental guidance in terms of what to expect for planners, commanders, and deploying servicemembers. Some sources exist, but simply posting information on the Defense Intelligence Agency Web site is insufficient. Both push and pull are necessary. There must be attention to identifying full-spectrum intelligence and open-source requirements that are essential to effective understanding as well as communication at all levels.

regarding media monitoring, we must keep a pulse not only on what is watched but also on its public credibility

As crises become more volatile, there must be better pulsing and synchronization of information. There is need for face-to-face engagement instead of the increasing tendency to rely on demarches delivered by others, telephone calls, cables, and interlocutors that do not convey the same national purpose. Moreover—and this is especially key for forward-deployed combatant commanders—we must more pervasively engage multilateral and international organizations (including nongovernmental organizations that understand who the true influencers are in an affected population and have conduits to them), expand our flexible deterrent options, refine interagency requirements in plans, integrate strategic communication planning elements into standing joint force headquarters, develop documents that identify interagency requirements, and establish standing information coordinating committees to better fuse strategic communication both in theater as well as with Washington.

As combat operations appear imminent, we must finalize information planning with both the interagency community and with allies. Country-specific, regional, and transnational strategic communication requirements should have already been identified and expertise deployed to key information nodes in the region so that planning and relationship-building are completed in advance and refined implementation can occur. Moreover, while planning is indeed done in

phases, there must be simultaneous informational and operational planning for the post-conflict period, which can clearly prove more complex, challenging, and of longer duration than force-on-force operations. Feedback loops are essential to ensure resonance and modification of approaches, conduits of influence, products, and actions when appropriate. As during crises, dedicated personnel and systems must be in place to measure the effectiveness of messages and actions, monitor adversarial media, accelerate response times at all levels, and preempt or counteract enemy misinformation and disinformation. We must ensure the capacity for both individual and collective targeting—from sophisticated elites to the illiterate. Databases drawn from all available sources must be assembled months in advance. Targeting guidance must be issued, and tactical as well as theater-wide plans for radio, television, Internet, print, and face-to-face communications must be in place.
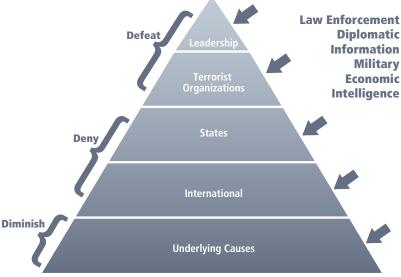
Operations in Afghanistan and Iraq have underscored that we must create a greater capacity to capture still and video images and develop improved means to transmit, package, and use them imaginatively. Every effort must be made to more effectively reach out to allies, friends, and neutrals and to prioritize our organizational, joint, interagency, and coalition efforts. Based on experience, there are requirements for rapid adjustment, dissemination of good news, and phasing away U.S. voices and faces to fade into the background while those of the nation in which the operation is being conducted take the lead. We must understand that we may no longer be the critical or most credible deliverers of the message. In fact, we must do everything we can to assist the nation in articulating what must become its, not our, priorities. Coordinating messages with combat power on every level, we must accelerate the defeat of enemy forces and be prepared for such factors as the desertion, defection, and surrender of enemy forces as well as demonstrations by civilians.

Servicemembers must understand that in today's information environment, as underscored by the actions of a few at the Abu Ghraib prison, their individual deeds can have strategic consequence for either good or ill, affecting not just their immediate surroundings, but things as far reaching as alliance trust, confidence, and even continued coalition participation. Improvement is needed in capturing the positive acts of our own Soldiers, Sailors, Airmen, and Marines, the activities of the U.S. Agency for International Development, the citizens themselves, and other parties across the

country. It is essential that the world, as well as regional and U.S. domestic audiences, sees these images of security, collaborative progress, and hope.

In post-conflict operations, interagency coordination on the ground becomes even more critical regionally as well as internationally. Information coordinating committees become vital for interagency, coalition, and potentially international coordination, cooperation, and synergy. Again, the importance of good news cannot be overemphasized. Nor can constantly assessing resonance and target audiences, disseminating to multiple audiences, dealing with insurgents and former regime elements, not giving untoward legitimacy to low-level "thorns" in the process, and "incentivizing" the populace toward cooperation and providing information. Better care must be taken in preparing the Armed Forces for the always difficult transition from warfare to positive engagement with a defeated populace. Joint interagency coordination groups, such as those established in Iraq, are key to engagement at the personal level as well as to coordination, providing cogent explanations for coalition activities, responding to questions from key communicators and "influentials," managing funding for projects identified as critical to the quality of life for the common citizen, and transitioning from occupier to partner. The message must be communicated to locals that it is their country and their future, and thus their responsibility—with international assistance—to achieve post-conflict stability.

Terrorism Structure and Approach
Defend—Always, Everywhere

Measures of Effectiveness

At issue is how to establish and institutionalize measures of effectiveness—standards of comparison used to evaluate the progress of an operation—at the strategic, operational, and tactical levels. Lack of established and agreed criteria, failure to fuse intelligence efforts, and shortfalls in dedicated personnel, linguistic oversight, and technological monitoring continue to inhibit data compilation, fusion, and dissemination.

For instance, there is a need to measure the sentiments and actions of:

■ the populace (not monolithic in Iraq or Afghanistan—demographics must be understood)
■ elites, whose actions and messages impact audiences and decisionmakers
■ decisionmakers (de facto and official).

Regarding media monitoring, we must keep a pulse not only on what is watched but also on its public credibility. In addition, those involved in such efforts must do more than simply documenting what was broadcast. They must also tell commanders the range of implications as well as propose what might be done about it—and by whom!

Strategically, leading indicators include alliance participation, statements by heads of state and government leaders, policy endorsement, mobilization, votes in the United Nations and other multinational organizations, resource commitments (forces, equipment, funds, civilian police or other trainers, and facilities), regional Friday sermons, intercepts and intelligence cooperation, international and national media coverage, actions and messages from multinational organizations (such as the Gulf Cooperation Council, Organization of Islamic Council, and Arab League), local alliances, cross-border cooperation, polling, *fatwa*s, resonance in academic publications, recall of ambassadors for consultations, and the closing of foreign missions.

Operationally, primary indicators are statements by senior officials and military commanders, statements from religious organizations such as the *hawza,* regional Friday sermons, troop movements and exercises, combat power demonstrations, border and maritime operations, demonstrations or other civil disobedience, national media reporting, enhanced intelligence-gathering, key leader defections and large-scale desertions, self-generated grounding of combat aircraft, self-generated return to garrisons, *fatwa*s, national polls, and large unit surrenders.

Iraqi general speaking to media at opening of border patrol fort in Al Zaid

Tactically, important indicators are individual or unit desertions, defections, surrenders, abandonment of equipment, civilian compliance or noncompliance, local open-source print, radio, and television coverage, Friday prayers, influential *imam*s' statements, *fatwa*s, meetings, attendance at established local, regional, or provincial coordination committees, polling, recruitment and retention figures in military/security forces (such as the National Guard, police, Facilities Protection Service, border police, and army), attacks on coalition forces and civilians, level of intelligence reported to coalition forces or hotlines, intercepts, paramilitary cooperation, reestablishment of a secure environment, school attendance or closings, civilian compliance with interim government directives, Internet traffic, willingness of students and others to engage in discussions and participate in focus groups, telephone call-in data, reports from USAID and its British equivalent, the Department for International Development, as well as other nongovernmental organizations, willingness to be hired for coalition-led infrastructure enhancement projects, focus groups, surveys of elites, open-source photography, and graffiti.

In a time of defense budgets predominantly focused on Iraq and Afghanistan, but with other global concerns, evolving overseas basing, sustained forward deployments, and increased instability, it is critical to reinforce perceptions of American commitment through diplomatic engagement and outreach, particularly toward the Muslim world and against Islamic and other extremists. It is vital to underscore the Nation's economic and developmental assistance as well as its military capacity and reliability. The way friends, allies, former adversaries, future enemies, and neutrals view our capabilities, as well as our intentions, remains fundamental to strategic and conventional deterrence and to our ability to resolve disputes and prevail in conflict. Today's international security environment requires not only the effective application of emerging technologies to enhance the command and control of the tactical commander, but also the imaginative implementation of information strategies and campaigns at the national and theater levels.

Enhanced cooperation, coordination, and cohesion of information efforts, from the national level to the tactical, bringing to bear all the resources and conduits of influence needed, are essential to meet today's challenges and tomorrow's unknowns. By encouraging long-term change, attacking the sources of conflict, and encouraging openness and dialogue, strategic communicators can contribute significantly to keeping the peace, reinforcing stability, and inhibiting terrorism, the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, and the flow of drugs. In addition, they can enhance U.S. power projection, accelerate war termination, and help in complex postconflict stability and reconstruction operations.

Maintaining the peace is better than resolving crises. Containing conflict is better than committing forces. If combat is necessary, shortened conflict with minimum loss of life on both sides and postconflict stability are the preferred outcomes. Winning the information war is imperative to all these efforts. Thus, strategic communication—the effective integration of statecraft, public affairs, public diplomacy, and military information operations, reinforced by political, economic, and military actions—is required to advance these foreign policy objectives. No single contributor is preeminent. All are required in a synchronized and coherent manner. **JFQ**

NOTES

[1] Jeffrey B. Jones, "The Third Wave and the Fourth Dimension," in *Special Operations Forces: Roles and Missions in the Aftermath of the Cold War,* ed. Richard H. Schultz, Robert L. Pfaltzgraff, and W. Bradley Stock (Collingdale, PA: Diane Publishing, 1996).

[2] Joseph S. Nye, *Soft Power* (New York: Public Affairs, 2004).

[3] Alvin and Heidi Toffler, *War and Anti-War* (Boston, MA: Little, Brown and Company, 1993).