

Defining the Information Campaign

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NO OFFICIAL military definition for an information campaign exists, despite the frequent use of that term to describe a technique used in information operations (IO). The current review of Joint Publication (JP) 3-13, Joint Doctrine for Information Operations, presents an opportunity to officially define and describe the information campaign as a viable technique for information operations and an alternative to perception management.¹

Media reports from Iraq point to concerns within the military that forces cannot distinguish between an

information campaign, information operations, and perception management. We must define the information campaign so it can be easily distinguished from perception management.

In the wake of military operations against Fallujah, Iraq, CNN and other news organizations reported that the military intentionally used the news media to gauge enemy reactions to news reports.² CNN reported that military commanders were warned not to mix up information operations with the dissemination of news to reporters. The military was concerned about blurring distinctions among the goals of psychological

operations (PSYOP) against enemy forces; the dissemination of timely, accurate information to reporters; and efforts to influence international audiences. (As reported, the Fallujah incident more closely resembles perception management than the broader area of information operations.)

Joint Publication 1-02, *Department of Defense Dictionary of Military and Associated Terms*, defines perception management as “actions to convey and/or deny selected information and indicators to foreign audiences to

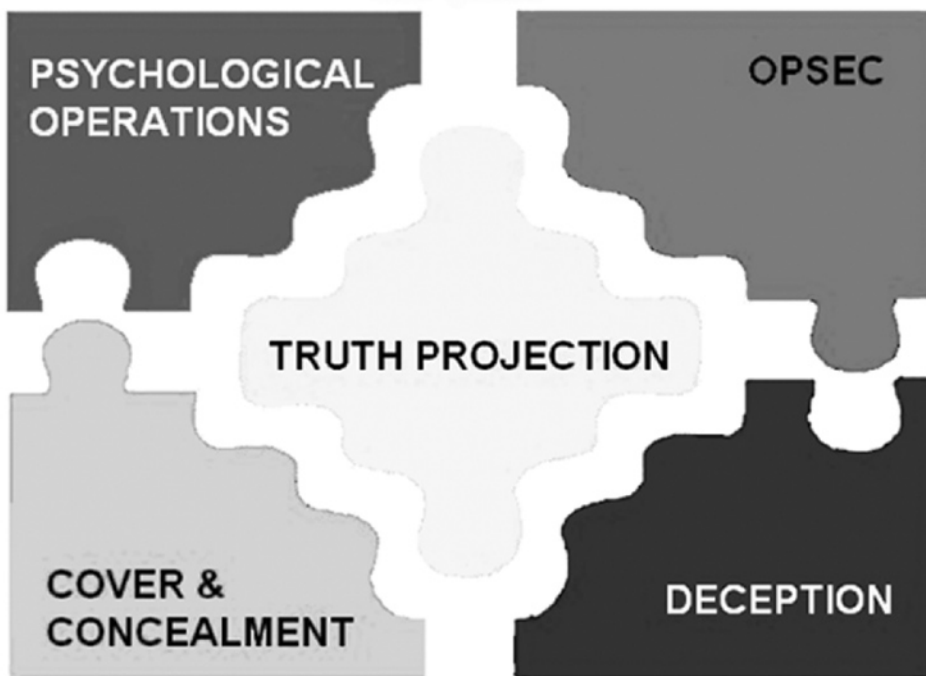


Figure 1. Perception management.

influence their emotions, motives, and objective reasoning as well as to intelligence systems and leaders at all levels to influence official estimates, ultimately resulting in foreign behaviors and official actions favorable to the originator's objectives. In various ways, perception management combines truth projection, operations security, cover and deception, and psychological operations."³ (See figure 1.)

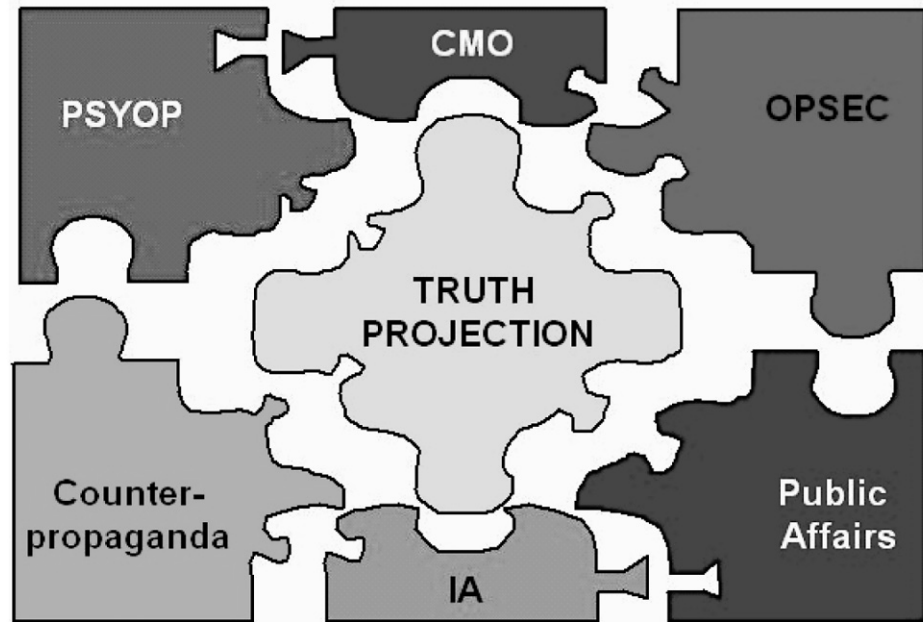


Figure 2. Components of an information campaign.

The main contributors to perception management relate directly to several IO capabilities. For example, public affairs (PA) operations project the truth about military operations through public information, command information, and community relations activities directed at both internal and external audiences. Operations security (OPSEC) and military deception both contribute to cover and concealment for information operations, but both also support perception management. According to joint doctrinal publications, psychological operations are also a principal contributor to information operations and perception management.

With so much overlap, some military and media representatives could confuse information operations and perception management; they might mistake an information campaign for perception management and quickly discredit it. To employ the information campaign concept effectively in information operations, we must clearly define it so as to distinguish it from perception management.

U.S. and coalition forces have conducted or are conducting information campaigns in Bosnia, Kosovo, Serbia, Afghanistan, and Iraq to counter propaganda and disinformation generated by foreign governments and factions that control or intimidate the media. Properly defining the term would give practitioners of these and future information campaigns a solid doctrinal framework with which to work. A clear-cut definition would clarify doctrinal

relationships between information operations and public affairs, and information operations and civil-military operations, and it could help counter the belief that PA and PSYOP assets cannot support a common objective.

To preserve the information campaign as a viable IO technique, its definition should avoid any similarity to perception management by foregoing references to deception and shaping perceptions. An information campaign should generate true information about military operations and the information environment for external audiences. This approach to defining an information campaign would allow PSYOP and PA assets to coordinate and synchronize their actions to provide information to an external audience. Public affairs would continue to develop information for internal (U.S. and coalition) audiences while supporting an information campaign designed to reach external audiences. For clarity and consistency, the term information campaign should not be used to describe public information and command information efforts to reach internal audiences. PSYOP would still be focused on external or foreign audiences.

Potentially all IO capabilities, including but not limited to PA, PSYOP, and counterpropaganda, can contribute to an information campaign. Information assurance would figure in the mix by protecting and

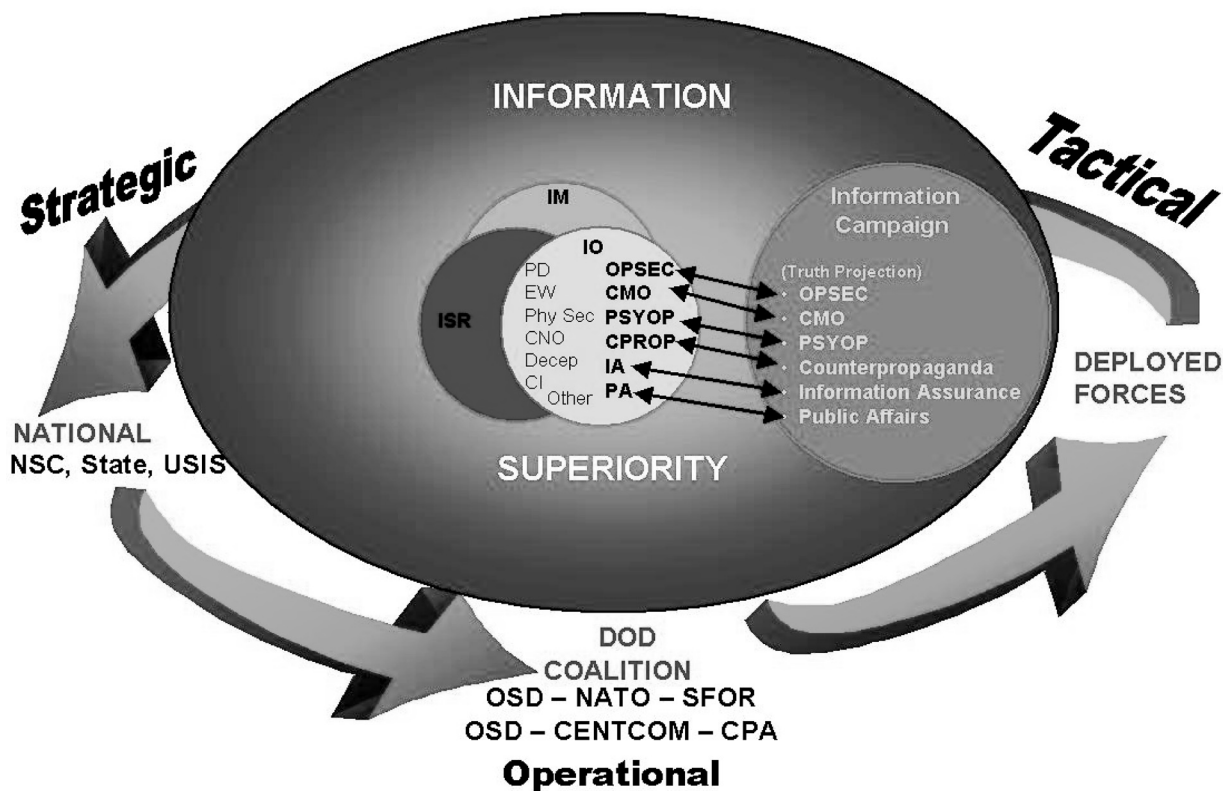


Figure 3. Information campaign unity of effort.

defending information and information systems. As part of an information campaign, OPSEC would identify, control, and protect unclassified evidence associated with sensitive operations and activities. (See figure 2.)

Some doctrinal purists might argue that using “campaign,” a strategic and operational word, could suggest that information campaigns occur only at strategic and operational levels. But tactical forces and even individual soldiers participate in or conduct information campaigns; they have been key elements of information campaigns in Bosnia, Kosovo, Afghanistan, and Iraq. A successful information campaign must be fully synchronized and coordinated to ensure unity of effort at each level of war (strategic, operational, and tactical). (See figure 3.) Also, strategic- and operational-level planners must provide tactical forces with the information management, intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance capabilities needed to fully support information campaigns.

A Working Definition

Joint Publication 3-13 should define the information campaign, and that definition should be included in JP 1-02 and other applicable doctrinal references. The following definition could serve as a starting point: Information campaign—Offensive and defensive information operations that convey true, unclassified information about military operations and the information environment to external audiences.**MR**

NOTES

1. Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS) Joint Publication (JP) 3-13, Joint Doctrine for Information Operations (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office [GPO], 2005).
2. Barbara Starr and Jamie McIntyre, “Pentagon debate rages over ‘information operations’ in Iraq,” CNN, 2 December 2004, on-line at <<http://edition.cnn.com/com/2004/US/12/02/pentagon.media>>, accessed 27 October 2005.
3. JCS, JP 1-02, Department of Defense Dictionary of Military and Associated Terms (Washington, DC: U.S. GPO, 12 April 2001, as amended through 9 January 2003).

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