



## PSYOPS: An Orwellian monster dressed as a casualty reducer

"Advertising does not drive the consumption of "junk food", it just influences the consumer's brand choice", claimed speakers at a symposium on child obesity held at the Beehive last week. At the same time the LTSA claims credit for reducing road deaths through its graphic anti drink drive television campaign.

In warfare, the ultimate casualty producer, marketing campaigns aimed at both friend and foe are dressed up under the name of psychological operations (PSYOPS). PSYOPS is a weapon that recognizes the key nature of human psyche to the ultimate unfolding of any military campaign and uses information for its powers of influencing thoughts and emotions. An understanding of human behaviour, cultural and historical knowledge and sensitivity, and communication and technology expertise are elements of effective PSYOPS. Well in advance of an open military invasion of Iraq, the United States began deploying PSYOPS units.

A secondary role for PSYOPS forces is providing communication mediums in a disaster. Many of the elements they use are germane to the campaigns we put in place for health education and communicating with our populations in an emergency/disaster situation.

"Psychological operations are operations planned to convey selected information and indicators to targeted foreign audiences to influence their emotions, motives, objective reasoning, and ultimately the behaviour of foreign governments, organizations, groups, and individuals. The purpose of PSYOPS is to induce or reinforce attitudes and behaviour that supports US national policy objectives." states the Doctrine for Joint Psychological Operations. Joint Pub 3-53; 10 July 1996. Available at: [www.dtic.mil/doctrine/jel/new\\_pubs/jp3\\_53.pdf](http://www.dtic.mil/doctrine/jel/new_pubs/jp3_53.pdf).

The doctrine speaks of the need to disseminate "truthful information to foreign audiences in support of national objectives during peace, conflict, and war" as distinguished from black propaganda," the propagation of frank untruths". Truth and untruth are rather subjective terms. Only last year, the U.S. government was forced to abandon its plans for the controversial Office of Strategic Influence when reports surfaced about its intention to place false news articles in the media of both friendly and unfriendly nations.

PSYOPS are designed to lower morale and efficiency in their target audience, creating dissidence and disaffection, isolation and alienation. PSYOPS have the potential to serve as a critical non lethal weapons system, as well as a force protector and combat multiplier. Arguably, PSYOPS have the potential to save lives. PSYOPS recognises the psychological dimension affecting political leaders and their civilian populations, as well as those who may fight in battle, their military leaders, and staff.

In any conflict, antagonists want adversaries unsure about their cause and capabilities, if not sure about impending defeat; adversaries who, even if unwilling to surrender, will exert little will to engage in combat "To seduce the enemy's soldiers from their allegiance and encourage them to surrender is of special service, for an adversary is more hurt by desertion than by slaughter." Flavius Vegetius Rhenatus, c. 378 CE.

The History of PSYOPS is as old as the history of war. Sun Tsu, a noted Chinese thinker c. 500 BCE, wrote a seminal treatise entitled "The Art of War." He displayed a keen understanding of the importance of intelligence and psychology in both diplomacy and war. "To capture the enemy's entire army is better than to destroy it; to take intact a regiment, a company, or a squad is better than to destroy them. For to win one hundred victories in one hundred battles is not the acme of skill. To subdue the enemy without fighting is the supreme excellence."

### Inside this Issue

PSYOPS: An Orwellian monster dressed as a casualty reducer	1
Canadian Disaster Management Model for Health Sector	4
Are we heading for a low winter flu season?	4
Editors soapbox	5
Upcoming events	5



On a bombing raid (leaflet drop) over Iraq  
Another kind of "paper war"

PSYOPS has the potential to serve as a critical non lethal weapons system

(Continued on page 2)

(Continued from page 1)

Alexander the Great in conquering almost all of the "known world" in c. 300 BCE overcame superior forces by disseminating accounts of his savagery and prowess. Alexander instructed his armourers to construct oversized armour breastplates and helmets that would fit "giants," men 7 to 8 feet tall. In the evening before battle, the oversized armour was left out on the fields, inspiring terror and ultimately the withdrawal of his foes.

Napoleon Bonaparte believed in targeting hostile forces more on a psychological level than a physical one. He said, "There are but two powers in the world, the sword and the mind. In the long run the sword is always beaten by the mind. Psychological operations developed into a formal tool during World War II. Both sides used PSYOPS extensively. Japan's Tokyo Rose and Germany's Axis Sally remain two memorable characters of the time. A compelling example of British PSYOPS was offered on the BBC as English language lessons for the threatening German invaders. In flawless German, the following messages were presented:

*".....and so it will be best if you learn a few useful phrases in English before visiting us...Now, just repeat after me: DAS BOOT SINKT. The boat is sinking. The boat is sinking...DAS WASSER IST KALT. The water is cold. SER KALT. Very cold...Now I will give you a verb that should be very useful. Again, please repeat after me. ICH BRENNEN. I am burning. DU BRENNST. You are burning. ER BRENNT. He is burning. WIR BRENNEN. We burn..."*

In the 1990-1991 Gulf War, 29 million PSYOPS pamphlets weighing some 29 tons were dropped on Iraq and are estimated to have reached 98% of Iraq's 300,000 soldiers. Many of the estimated 100,00 soldiers who deserted or surrendered were found clutching pamphlets or hiding them in their clothing.



Iraqi soldiers surrendering

That success is tempered by more recent experience in Afghanistan where while bombs fell and ground troops fought, PSYOPS focused on engaging the Afghani people. Air-dropped leaflets and radio broadcasts attempted to educate, protect, and support. In addition to dropping packages of humanitarian relief, the United States dropped flyers imploring the population to stay clear of likely military targets; advising the unacceptability of harbouring terrorists and the consequences of doing so; and promoting distinction between US support of Islam and Afghanistan vs specific targets of the Taliban, Osama bin Laden, and Al-Qaeda.

The effectiveness of these various interventions is unclear. Many Afghanis were focused on essentials of survival rather than political struggle. High rates of illiteracy may have impeded real understanding of the messages. While Taliban's Radio Shariat was quickly silenced, efforts to air drop radios for new broadcasts were problematic, with many radios shattering on impact. There was little mechanism for feedback about the acceptability of content or the extent of distribution or comprehension. Many "independent" journalists have questioned the American understanding of the Afghani psyche.

Today PSYOPS resources are distributed throughout the US Armed Forces. The 193rd Special Operations Wing of the Pennsylvania National Guard in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, is the most deployed Air Force National Guard Unit in the country. The 193rd provides an airborne broadcast platform for state and national disasters and emergencies. Four specially configured EC-130 turboprop aircraft (Commander Solo) are equipped for broadcast in AM, FM, HFTV, and military communication bands. Additional Talon aircraft drop leaflets.

Both the Navy and Marines have PSYOPS capabilities, with more limited broadcasting, leaflet dissemination, and audiovisual production functions.

In mid-December 2002, Commander Solo began broadcasting radio into southern Iraq, urging Iraqi military to abandon their support of Saddam Hussein's regime. The messages attempt to discredit the Hussein regime and stress the distinction between the political regime and innocent military and Iraqi people. Specific themes of broadcasts, which incorporate Arabic songs, include the regime's diversion of money intended for food to weapons production; the use of state money for personal indulgences, such as palaces; Hussein's use of chemical weapons on his own people; his record of non-



Sample radio leaflet  
Mass dropping of leaflets provides Iraqis with information about the times and frequencies of future US radio broadcasts

(Continued on page 3)

(Continued from page 2)

compliance with the United Nations; and current world resolve to eliminate his destructive abilities.

More information about this is available at [www.psywarrior.com](http://www.psywarrior.com)

Clinical psychologists and experts in culture and language research the content and style of all messages to optimise their effectiveness. The first known use of mass email, described as a kind of "electronic leaflet drop," has been reported. The email targets Iraqi government and military officials, imploring cooperation with the United States.



Front and back of a 'cause and effect leaflet  
"If you fire at our planes you will die"

In the future PSYOPS will reflect advances in technology and science such as: expansion and sophistication of networks, upsurge of mass media, and increasingly sophisticated social sciences that advance our understanding of specific elements of human behaviour. Content and dissemination will reflect technology and telecommunications transformation. Technology increasingly allows the sending of any content over any channel (eg, radio via Internet). Mass broadcasting over all channels may be replaced by more narrow casting to smaller targeted audiences, even to the level of individuals. Higher quality digital media streams will be distributed via digital broadcasts. The Internet, with Web sites, email, chat rooms, and messaging, offers new channels with endless content.

Beyond evolution of existing technology advanced data mining will facilitate better understanding of both populations and networks and give more access to measurements of effectiveness, including receivability and receptivity. The lumbering Commander Solo platform, with old equipment and technologies, is not technically capable of participating in many of these developments.

PSYOPS, like everyone else, will have to contend with the incompatibilities of platforms, uncertainties about which innovations will prevail, fragmentation and lack of standards, which always confound the planning process. Innovation, driven by military necessity, usually leads to advanced technology spin off for commercial gain.

However, the literature leads me to the conclusion that PSYOPS is feeding on marketing techniques and technological already tested in the commercial world. Spam is already a modern scourge of our web society.

Here in New Zealand, having been exposed to PSYOPS campaigns around the Americas Cup we can have no doubt on the way our emotions can be manipulated towards a desired end. What can we learn from PSYOPS use of those techniques and technological advances that will advance our ongoing efforts to educate and inform our populations.

PSYOPS generate understandable concerns about an Orwellian future. Yet a future of physical hostilities between nations is an equally chilling and unacceptable prospect.

"There is no instance of a nation benefiting from prolonged warfare." Sun Tzu, c. 500 BC

While the guidance from Sun Tzu has never been more compelling, his message becomes increasingly challenging to implement. The role of PSYOPS must be understood in this context.

## Information requested

Adam Creed, Security & Emergency Planning Manager, Canterbury District Health Board writes:

We are in the process of revising our policy and procedure for activating our Information (Media inquiries) Officer. I am keen to hear whether any DHBs have any advice regarding the type of incidents that they involve their Information Officers in, how this is done and the tasks that this person performs.

You can reply directly to Adam at [adam.creed@cdhb.govt.nz](mailto:adam.creed@cdhb.govt.nz)



## Canadian Disaster Management Model for the Health Sector

The 13th World Conference on Disaster Management will be held in Toronto, Ontario, Canada from the 22–25 June. More information is available at [www.wcdm.org](http://www.wcdm.org). Toronto is a bit far for most of us who have trouble getting leave to go to Australia. However, all is not lost. There is some access to the strong health stream at the conference.

Larry Gwiazda, Director, Disaster Management Services, Manitoba Health will be speaking on a comprehensive disaster management model and strategy for use by the health care sector in Manitoba to ensure a strategic, all encompassing strategy by all sectors. The strategy has been adopted by Manitoba Health and is in the process of being adopted and implemented within the regional health authorities.

His presentation will provide an understanding of the principles underlying the strategy. It will provide an understanding of how this comprehensive strategy is being applied in the department and in the RHAs. As well it will provide information on the application of the strategy to all components of the health sector.

His presentation is no doubt based on a Manitoba Health Disaster Management document "Disaster Management Model for the Health Sector: Guidelines for Program Development". This document can be downloaded from [www.gov.mb.ca/health/dms/branch.html](http://www.gov.mb.ca/health/dms/branch.html)

The conference also includes a presentation by a U.S. Navy Medical team on The HEAT: A Comprehensive Measure of Hospital Emergency Preparedness. The conference programme notes To improve emergency preparedness, hospitals must be able to measure readiness. Multiple tools have been developed to achieve this goal, yet none has combined ease of use, practicality, and accuracy. The presenters will describe an innovative tool developed to assess emergency preparedness in the U.S. Navy Medical Department – an organization that operates medical centres, hospitals, and clinics around the world.

We are working to get more information on HEAT and make it available to New Zealand planners



## Are we heading for a low winter flu season?

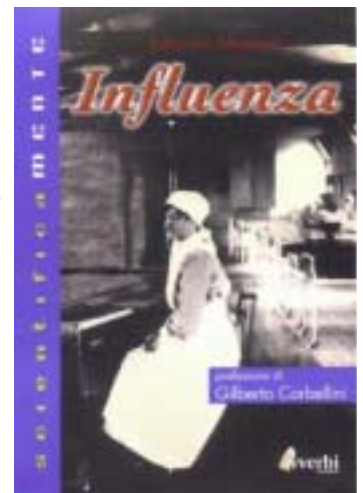
One of the joys of being in the southern hemisphere is that we usually two seasons behind in the annual influenza cycle as it works its way around the world. This year, just as we are being alerted to the latest avian flu jump to humans in Hong Kong/China the news from the northern hemisphere is that this winter we may enjoy a light influenza season in New Zealand.

Influenza activity in the United States was low from late September to early January. However, activity is expected to increase during late winter. Although more influenza B viruses have been reported than influenza A viruses during the early part of the season, more states have reported influenza A viruses than influenza B viruses. The virus types that will predominate during the remainder of the season are unpredictable.

Encouragingly, the influenza viruses that have been characterized antigenically to date have been well matched by the current vaccine strains. Because vaccination is the best prevention against influenza, persons at high risk for serious complications from influenza, such as health-care workers, and contacts of persons at high risk are encouraged to get vaccinated before the winter season.

Influenza-associated mortality varies substantially from year to year, depending on several factors, including the type and subtype of circulating influenza viruses. Since the 1990-91 influenza season, the greatest annual mean numbers of deaths have been associated with influenza A(H3N2) viruses, followed by deaths from influenza B viruses and then influenza A(H1N1) viruses.

Antiviral medications can be useful for early treatment of influenza and as an adjunct to influenza vaccination for prevention and control. When administered within 48 hours of symptom onset, antiviral treatment of influenza can reduce the duration of illness by approximately 1 day in healthy adults. However, most of the antiviral medications that are approved for treatment of influenza A virus infections are not active against influenza B viruses.



## Your network

- € Contribute your ideas
- € Ask for information
- € Discuss the articles
- € Share your opinion
- € Suggest improvements

**Bruce Parkes**  
**Risk Management Co-ordinator**  
**St John, Northern Region**  
[bruce.parkes@stjohnnorthern.org.nz](mailto:bruce.parkes@stjohnnorthern.org.nz)

Check out our Web site at  
[www.hemnzn.org.nz](http://www.hemnzn.org.nz)

## Up coming Conferences

### Health Practitioners Competence Assurance Bill

25 - 26 March 2003, Copthorne Plimmer Towers, Wellington  
 Cost \$1695 + GST for 2 days  
 Details and on-line registration from [www.conferenz.co.nz/](http://www.conferenz.co.nz/)

### Hospital Capacity and Bed Management

8 - 9 April 2003, Waipuna Hotel Auckland  
 Cost \$1695 + GST for 2 days  
 Details and on-line registration from [www.conferenz.co.nz/](http://www.conferenz.co.nz/)

### 13th World Congress on Disaster+Emergency Medicine

6—10 May 2003, Melbourne, Australia  
 Details from [www.wcdem2003.com](http://www.wcdem2003.com)

## Editor's soapbox



PSYOPS may seem an unusual subject for this Bulletin aimed at those working in health care but I believe there is relevance at two levels. First, clinical psychologists are a crucial component of the team devising PSYOPS campaigns and the technology used is basically the same technology available to us for our daily communication efforts.

Two recent examples, the dissemination of information about the Avian flu outbreak in Hong Kong and advice about cyanide and its antidotes suggests that we have not learnt how to target our intended audience, attract their attention and pass information in an easily understood format.

In some regions this has been done well. In others, communication is an oxymoron. Hard work and constant maintenance seem to be the common factors for those regions with good communication flows.

In the last few days the Ministry of Health has got much better at targeting the information missiles fired from their silos. They need those of us who are much closer to the action to act as spotters redirecting or forwarding their missives to people who need to know.

The problem is not confined to health. In all sectors, information too often fails to reach those "in the field" who need it for their work. This raises two questions: Has the right target audience been identified? And what efforts have been made to confirm the information reaches that target audience?

## Bruce Parkes

For their anniversary, a couple went out for a romantic dinner. Their teenage daughters said they would fix a dessert and leave it waiting.

When they got home, they saw that the dining room table was beautifully set with china, crystal and candles, and there was a note that read: "Your dessert is in the refrigerator. We are staying with friends, so go ahead and do something we wouldn't do!"

"I suppose," the husband responded, "we could clean the house"

## 13th World Congress on Disaster+Emergency Medicine

According to the pundits, Oil War 2003 will be over before the 13th World Congress on Disaster+Emergency Medicine kicks off in Melbourne from the 6th to 10th of May 2003. Whether or not the invasion of Iraq takes place, planning around expected health issues or measures taken to combat problems experienced will probably be discussed during the conference.

Places at the conference are still available. A conference brochure and registration pack can also be viewed and downloaded at [www.wcdem2003.com](http://www.wcdem2003.com). Take the opportunity to be involved in an event that will influence the direction of emergency public health for the next 20 years.

