AU/ACSC/072/2000-04

AIR COMMAND AND STAFF COLLEGE

AIR UNIVERSITY

AIR WAR OVER SERBIA: IT IS IMPORTANT TO WIN THE INFORMATION WAR

by

Robin F. Grantham, Major, USAFR

A Research Report Submitted to the Faculty

In Partial Fulfillment of the Graduation Requirements

Advisor: Ms. Patricia Battles

Maxwell Air Force Base, Alabama

April 2000

DISTRIBUTION STATEMENT A
Approved for Public Release
Distribution Unlimited

20010924 095

DISTRIBUTION A:

Approved for public release; distribution is unlimited.

Air Command and Staff College
Maxwell AFB, Al 36112

Disclaimer

The views expressed in this academic research paper are those of the author and do not reflect the official policy or position of the US government or the Department of Defense. In accordance with Air Force Instruction 51-303, it is not copyrighted, but is the property of the United States government.

Contents

Page

DISCLAIMER ii

PREFACE iv

ABSTRACT v

INTRODUCTION 1
Limitations of the study 3
The War, As Conducted 3

THE WAR FOR PUBLIC OPINION, AS CONDUCTED 7
Mixed Messages 11

JOINT VISION 2010 AND THE NEW MEDIA BATTLEFIELD 15
Fog and Friction 18

RECOMMENDATIONS 20

CONCLUSION 24

PLANNING CHECKLIST: RECOMMENDATIONS ENCAPSULATED 26

GLOSSARY 27

BIBLIOGRAPHY 28

Preface

The dust has barely settled from Operation Allied Force, especially the air war over Serbia, yet the after-action reports and analyses are being written. While the merits of air power will be debated ad nauseum for decades, perhaps analysts should keep in mind a more overarching question. Was this conflict one of bombs or words? Was information used as an instrument of power, where did it fit in, and was it wielded effectively? As a public affairs practitioner, I am a small cog in the information IOP machinery, yet the way this machine is used directly impacts my work. Thus, my interest in the topic.

However, the data, and the emotions behind them, are still raw. I have taken what information was readily available from military sources, weighed it against the information available in the media, and tried to develop my own conclusions. Ironically, the media is both a source of information and a player in this conflict.

I am grateful to Ms. Patricia Battles, my faculty research advisor, for encouraging me to pursue the larger question of the strategic implications of public affairs, rather than to focus on the tactical. In addition, her suggestion to frame the argument in Clausewitzian terms gave me an anchor in this sea of analysis.

AU/ACSC/072/2000-04

Abstract

An examination of the public affairs strategy of the Air War Over Serbia (part of the NATO Operation Allied Force), reveals that tactics were well understood, but strategic guidance was missing. The research involved looking at the archive of information gathered primarily in theater which related to the conflict.

While it is as important to win the information war as it is to win the physical war, both campaigns need an overall game plan, a sense of direction, and a way to assess the results. The information campaign was a shotgun approach, lacking in concentration of forces or effort. Just as the operations effort must take into account, the public information portion of a conflict must assess the enemy threat and be prepared to counter asymmetric warfare—in this case blatant propaganda and control of media access—and be prepared to launch a credible offense.

Part 1

Introduction

All planning, particularly strategic planning, must pay attention to the character of contemporary warfare.

— Carl von Clausewitz

This paper is a result of the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff's direction to study the air war portion of Operation Allied Force. The research effort Air-Force wide has focused on strategic issues such as the application of doctrine, as well as the tactical application of air power, and the elements which contributed to prosecuting that campaign. I chose to focus on the strategic implications of the public affairs effort, rather than the tactics, although a look at tactics is important to establishing the strategic overview. From a tactical level, the PA practitioners did as good a job as anyone, with some notable errors and successes. The greater question remains, if the conflict in Kosovo can be characterized as an information-based conflict, or a war of words, were these professionals sent in unarmed? Was this a conflict of reasonably well-executed public affairs tactics, but no strategic goals? Finally, I submit that without a strategic framework, information is an ineffective instrument of power.

First, the question arises as to why military planners should even address the issue of media relations. Clausewitz explained that war as a phenomenon is comprised of a trinity of violence, which concerns the people; chance and probability, which relates to the military; and subordination to the policies of government.[1] Through the media, the military and government

can keep the people informed and, one hopes, committed to the operation. Perhaps Dr. Jamie Shea, NATO's spokesman, summed it up best:

> Winning the media campaign is just as important as winning the military campaign. Why? Because you keep your public opinion behind you; secondly, you convince your adversary that you are not going to give up. If you are taking the media campaign seriously, it means that you take winning seriously.[2]

Referring to the public affairs effort, Admiral James Ellis, Commander of Allied Forces in Southern Europe during the conflict commented in his after-action report: [Information is] a much underutilized instrument of national and alliance power… ignore it at your peril."[3]

The military operations of nearly a decade ago, Operation Desert Shield/Storm, set the stage for this conflict, in that the media played a large role in telling the coalition's story, highlighting coalition errors and failings, and reporting battle damage more clearly than many traditional sources. During that conflict, information was thrust onto the stage as a weapon, and in Kosovo, both sides wielded that sword.

The Serbs launched an information war in the form of propaganda early on. Milosevic's wife (and political advisor) told an American reporter that her nation was engaged in two wars, the bombing war and the media war, and that her husband should concentrate on the latter.[4] For its part, NATO seemed surprised that the opposition would thrust and parry with untruths and distortions—in other words, use a form of asymmetrical warfare—and we discovered that in this age of instant and unverified communications, truth is no defense. Contemporary warfare now includes this new, powerful weapon—information—and planners for this conflict were caught short on how best to use it, and how best to defend against the enemy's use of information.

Limitations of the Study

This research was commissioned by the US Air Forces Europe Studies and Analysis Directorate, an organization formed to study the air war over Serbia.[5] An enormous amount of material was made available to researchers, but in raw form, and despite the available technology, difficult to sift through in the time allowed. For instance, a search for the primary documents containing public affairs guidance yielded more than 500 results, simply because a plethora of messages referred back to the original PA guidance message without adding any new information. Therefore, the research for this paper was drawn from not only the raw data supplied by USAFE/SA, but also published articles and surveys conducted by other Air Force agencies. Even here, open-source references in the media numbered in the thousands, making the task monumental. Another key limitation of the study is that NATO forces cannot assess the "battle damage," so to speak, of their efforts on the Serb population and political elites. Were our efforts useful in any way: were our messages getting through to the Serbs and if so, what effect were they having?

The War, As Conducted

US and NATO Objectives. According to US Secretary of State Madeleine Albright, Secretary of Defense William Cohen, and NATO officials, the objectives at the outset of the conflict in Kosovo were to get the Serb leader to sign the peace accords, and failing that, to degrade his military to the point that they stopped the massacre of Albania Muslims.[6] Public affairs guidance from the Air Staff focused on Allied Force as a combined, NATO-led operation, emphasizing NATO and US capabilities.[7] As the conflict progressed, US and NATO officials began emphasizing a new objective, that of the Serbs allowing the Albanians to return safely to their homes.

While many in the military decry the fluid nature of political objectives and guidance, we must accept that the political realm is vastly different from the military world, and situations change quickly, if imperceptibly. Military leaders must learn to adapt to the changes. However, in this conflict, the public affairs guidance disseminated from the office of the U.S. Secretary of Defense was never amended to reflect the change in political intent, and could have been a rerun from Operation Desert Storm.[8] The stated objectives were to stress US participation in a coalition effort designed to stop the enemy from killing innocent civilians and destroying their property.[9] Missing from the guidance was the commander's intent, or something to tell commanders and public affairs professionals in the field what the objective of the guidance was, other than to talk about US capabilities and partnership in an allied effort. Conversely, direct guidance from CINCEUR at one point instructed the US PAOs to scale back operations because the allies felt overshadowed.[10] Also missing was a sense of how the PA community was supposed to achieve its objectives. With the proliferation of media outlets, one might say the PA community was overwhelmed with potential targets and no way to get the weapons—the messages—to the intended targets. Further, despite joint doctrine, we never established either a joint or combined public information center, so it's no surprise that we talked more about our allies than with them.

While the operational world talks about effects-based targeting, the public affairs field should be considering how best to target their messages as well. The original PA guidance was, simply put, tell the American public what a good job their military does, and how well it works within the NATO coalition, using pre-arranged key phrases.[11] This guidance suggests a shotgun approach, when the emphasis would have been better placed on what Clausewitz called concentration[12], or not dividing the forces (in this case, the effort). Without a strategic

framework, this guidance is no better than telling the PA community to go tell the Air Force story, and hope someone hears it.

The New Media Battlefield. The Air War over Serbia (AWOS), arguably the main focus of Operation Allied Force, was an information war. From one perspective, the people flying the missions and planning the tactics were heavily dependent on information from a tactical perspective—satellite imagery, battle damage assessments, and so forth. From a larger perspective, the campaign was one fought on the front page and the 24-hour news channels—and perhaps for the first time, on the internet—as both sides sought to grab and hold the headlines, and to win the hearts and minds of the other's population and leadership via the media. NATO officials used the media to convey the message that they were preserving Europe and defending the defenseless, but the Serb leader took the same weapon and used it against his attackers in a variety of ways.[13] For its part, NATO seemed unprepared for this counter-attack, and remained on the defensive in the information battles. Although Clausewitz claimed that defense was a "stronger form of fighting than attack,"[14] NATO did not assume a position of defensive strength, or using the defense to ready for attack, but was instead put wholly on the defensive. The coalition seemed unprepared for this attack and could not defend itself to advantage.

Public affairs guidance to the US forces focused on the tactical campaign, getting media coverage of unit activities and providing information to the public in traditional, push-pull ways.[15] Push the information out to the world; pull the media to your doorstep. Except that in this case, the action wasn't on our doorstep, and someone else was doing the pulling. NATO's lack of strategic planning in the public affairs arena left the coalition at a disadvantage.

This paper will examine the PA effort as conducted and suggest alternatives for counterattacking in this asymmetrical information war.

Notes

[1] Carl Von Clausewitz, *On War*, ed. and trans. Michael Howard and Peter Paret, (Princeton N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1984), 89.

[2] Jamie Shea, "The Kosovo Crisis and the Media: reflections of a NATO Spokesman," speech before the Atlantic Council of the United Kingdom, Reform Club, London, 15 July 1999

[3] Admiral James O. Ellis, "A View from the Top," (Briefing) September 1999.

[4] Hatchett, Ron. "How Long Will He Last?" *The NewsHour with Jim Lehrer*.. On-line. Internet, 30 April 1999. Available from http://web-cr05.pbs.org/plweb-cgi/fastweb?getdoc +newshour+newshour+3083+0+wAAA+hatchett.

[5] AWOS Terms of Reference. HQ USAFE/SA. 25 Oct 99.

[6] DefenseLink, Kosovo background page, undated, n.p.; on-line, Internet, available from http://www.defenselink.mil/specials/kosovo/.

[7] Message, 200021Z MAR 99, Secretary of Defense to units, 20 Mar 1999, Standing Public Affairs Plan For Kosovo-Related NATO-Led Air Strikes.

[8] The original PA guidance was cited as the primary PAG in late May for JTF Shining Hope, the humanitarian assistance operation in Albania, an operation unconnected to the Air War Over Serbia effort (Message 221855 MAY 99, classified secret) and was referenced as primary PAG in other classified situation reports as late as May.

[9] Message, 261546Z MAR 99, Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Public Affairs, Public Affairs Guidance On U.S. Participation In NATO Operation Allied Force. To units, 16 Mar 99.

[10] Lt Col Barbara Carr, deputy director, USAFE Public Affairs Directorate, interviewed by Maj Gary Pounder, USAF CADRE Intelligence Division, undated.

[11] Message, 261546Z MAR 99.

[12] Clausewitz, 84.

[13] James O. Kitfield, "Command And Control The Messenger," *National Journal,* Sept. 11, 1999, 2546.

[14] Clausewitz, 204.

[15] Message, 261546Z MAR 99.

Part 2

The War for Public Opinion, As Conducted

Issues can be decided by chances and incidents so minute as to figure in histories simply as anecdotes.

— Carl von Clausewitz

War, according to military historian and philosopher Carl von Clausewitz, is a continuation of national policy by other means.[1] When the United States and some of its NATO allies chose to intervene in Kosovo, the political leaders used the military as one instrument of power to achieve the policy goals of protecting "important national interests."[2] Just as the aircraft and machines were used to support that policy objective, the public affairs effort should have been tailored to meet the threat and achieve the objectives. Instead, the public information campaign never fully developed. If information was to be used as a concurrent instrument of power, then the military public information effort should have been closely correlated. However, NATO in general and the US military in particular appeared to have a more tactical, rather than strategic, objective for the use of this instrument of power. As a result, the PA tactics lacked congruence with the national objectives.

One possible handicap for the public affairs effort may have been the lack of a coordinated joint information bureau. While joint doctrine recommends establishing a JIB[3] (or combined information bureau in this case), the PA effort appears to have been conducted along national lines, and within the US chain of command, through European Command. After-action reports

from public affairs officers at bases in England[4] and Italy[5] made no reference to coordination with host nation public information representatives. The 16th Air ASETF PA, Aviano Air Base, Italy, report commended Air Forces Force (AFFOR) public affairs guidance which had been coordinated in theater with SHAPE and EUCOM, indicating that the PAOs in the field felt the guidance "provided focus and one-stop shopping."[6] Records do not indicate the PA office at the 2d Air Expeditionary Group in England ever received such guidance. Further, the 16th ASETF report complained that the AFFOR PAG conflicted with guidance from the Air Staff and major command.[7] As NATO spokesman, Dr. Shea mentioned the existence of a NATO media center[8], but this organization is not mentioned in any after-action report in the AWOS archives, underscoring the idea that if NATO had an information strategy, it was not shared with the field.

Yet another proof of the lack of a strategy was the guidance on media interviews. At first, media were allowed to use names of the people they interviewed. EUCOM Public Affairs officials eventually instructed the PAs in the field to avoid using aircrew names in media interviews, but this information was never formally issued as guidance. The instructions changed often: sometimes it included support personnel, then excluded support personnel and some aircrew, and finally was left up in the air. As one planner put it, "There was also no guidance which explained the logic behind the guidance—which would have been helpful to PAOs trying to explain the PAG to their respective commanders."[9] Anecdotal evidence suggested that the families of some of the aircrew who allowed their names to be used were receiving internet-based death threats, but rather no comprehensive PA policy was created. For their part, the media felt shut off from the people fighting the war, and suggested that the American public also felt distanced from a conflict in which there were no "heroes" or people-oriented stories which might help them relate to the effort.[10]

This lack of coordinated guidance to the field reinforces the idea that this operation suffered from a lack of public affairs strategic vision. Each unit was expected to host media as appropriate to the local commander's wishes, constrained by requests from the NATO commander to throttle back whenever media coverage appeared to be too heavily focused on US involvement. Further, the tactical and operational level units had no guidance on an overall game plan for the PA effort. Apparently, each unit, each command, each level of supervision had an idea of how best to conduct public affairs within its realm, but no one agency provided a bigger picture. Everyone knew what to do, but no one knew why.

Another symptom of the lack of overall PA planning and strategy was the imbalance between numbers of PA practitioners and media at different locations. At RAF Fairford, for instance, international media arrived early in the operation and remained in the area. Local and British national media interest also remained high, yet the contingency PA office there had at most three officers and two enlisted members to work nearly around the clock. More often, the office was staffed with one or two officers and one or two enlisted members, and more than 50 media representatives might show up for an event.[11] At Aviano Air Base, twice as many people augmented a fully staffed base PA office, and yet media were seldom allowed on the installation.[12] In their defense, they had accredited nearly 700 news media representatives and the crush of reporters was daunting. Still, the based was often closed to media. Deploying units, especially from Air Mobility Command, did not always bring PA assets with them, which meant that PA specialists had to be moved within the theater to handle media at disperse deployment locations, straining a command already heavily tasked to support the effort[13]. In other cases, units deployed a PA person into the theater with the unit without notifying EUCOM or USAFE. These people, unaccounted for, followed guidance from home station (not in-theater guidance),

seldom coordinated with the major command or unified command PA officials, and left as abruptly as they came.[14]

A more serious lack of strategy became evident when Air Combat Command allowed reporters to fly on B-52s during combat operations. Reporters and camera crews began arriving at the forward operating location in England unannounced and with no prior training in the altitude chamber (required for flights in the B-52). Apparently, PA officers at the Pentagon were telling reporters that anyone interested could be put on a mission.[15] The deployed PAO was able to put a few reporters aboard selected flights, but having the reporters along did impact the mission and could not be allowed if and when the bombers flew in closer range of Serb air defenses. Yet the Pentagon staff never coordinated with the deployed PAO to determine who should fly, and what objective was envisioned by having them fly, or how the media flights fit into an overall strategy.[16] Access was cut abruptly, leaving reporters to speculate about a changing mission for the aircraft or a change in NATO strategy, which diluted whatever gains might have been made in allowing the flights.

Of all the evidence that points to a lack of strategic thinking and planning on NATO's part, perhaps the most damning was the incident in which two USAF F-16s attacked what the pilots thought were military convoys near the village of Djakovica. Serb officials rushed media to the scene to prove that NATO had, instead, bombed a refugee convoy and killed nearly a dozen civilians. General Wesley Clark, NATO Supreme Commander, immediately blamed the Serbs for the killing, followed by an assertion from the Pentagon that the NATO warplanes had hit only military targets.[17] NATO also released video and audio tapes which had the pilots clearly and calmly discussing the incident—tapes which outraged the civilian community for their cold, unfeeling discussion of the incident, and which later were revealed to be from a different attack

altogether. Nearly a week later, the commander of the F-16's unit, the 31st Expeditionary Wing at Aviano, was brought to Brussels to explain the attack.[18] The end result was that step by step, NATO credibility slipped away, disappearing in the confusion brought on by mixed messages, conflicting statements and a lack of coherent information.

What damaged NATO most in "collateral damage" incidents was not the fact that civilians had been killed. The damage was done by NATO's denials, retractions, and overall sense of not knowing what was happening in the battlespace. NATO officials did not hesitate to agree that innocent people would be killed, and mistakes would be made, because that's the nature of war. But the public information arm of the alliance seemed totally unprepared to deal with incidents of collateral damage. Worse, "Milosevic's propaganda sometimes caught us by surprise," according the Shea.[19] The most basic strategy should have included a plan for dealing with this kind of response from the enemy. No commander would send aircraft into combat without assuming hostile response from the enemy, both offensively and defensively. If we are going to use words and information to attack the enemy, then we should expect to attacked in kind. Instead, we were surprised and caught off guard when the Serb leader was able to out-maneuver us on this informational battlespace.

Mixed Messages

One of NATO's concerns was the amount and tone of propaganda being generated by Milosevic. Military planners chose to target the television towers and studios as a means to stem the flow of untruths, although NATO spokesman Jamie Shea later denied this initiative.[20] The disconnect was bad enough in that a NATO official announced this information, and another later denied it, but a greater strategic problem resulted. NATO member nations are seen as the protectors of democracy and freedom, including freedom of speech. Yet here was NATO

admitting to an effort to deny freedom of speech to another country. Although Milosevic had terminated what free speech did exist in Serbia, NATO helped him in his efforts to paint that organization as an aggressor, working harder to deny freedoms in Serbia than to ensure them. To the rest of the world, NATO appeared to have resurrected and paraphrased one of the misguided tenets from Vietnam: we had to destroy freedom of speech in order to save it.

The lack of a strategic information plan was evident here as well. The same airwaves which carry misinformation can serve to carry NATO's messages, either through Commando Solo type transmissions or through newscasts which slip information through censors or which might ever be aired if the military and diplomatic pressures began to work. In addition, the populace can sense, even through censored news, when the situation has deteriorated for their leaders. Shutting down the transmitters might have satisfied a very short-term need to block information, but too many other sources of government-sponsored propaganda were available, to include radio and the internet[21], for NATO ever to have had an effect on the flow of misinformation from Milosevic. Shea said later in a speech to reporters that Kosovars were listening to NATO briefings on local TV and radio, and the tone of the briefings gave them hope.[22] Had we intended to cut off Serb propaganda, we would have cut ourselves off as well, and as Secretary Cohen told Congress, we weren't getting enough information to the Serbs as it was.[23]

NATO sent mixed messages to the rest of the world as well, creating a sense of indecision and internal friction. President Clinton declared at the beginning, "I do not intend to put our troops in Kosovo to fight a war."[24] Yet Gen Clark commented afterwards that Milosevic "had ample evidence to conclude that, had he not conceded when he did, the next step would have been the long-awaited and much-talked-about NATO ground effort."[25] One must assume Clark was conveying these messages to staff and reporters throughout the war, even if indirectly.

Perhaps his intention was to create confusion in Milosevic's mind and throw him off guard, but instead, the Serb leader appears to have taken advantage of the confusion in the ranks of his attackers to wait them out, a technique which Saddam Hussein has used to advantage with UN inspectors.[26] Milosevic had further incentive to wait out the coalition when Pentagon spokesman Kenneth Bacon and others made comments such as "We hope, relatively quickly, that the Serbs will realize they've made a mistake."[27] Combined with Clinton's comments about not using ground forces, the Serbs could easily take a page out of Iraq's strategy book and wait.

Other mixed messages were also evident. NATO claimed to be targeting only military objectives, but Lt Gen Short began agitating for strikes against "everything that kept the Serb leadership in power and comfort,"[28] and Air Chief Marshal Sir Richard Johns, Chief of the British Air Staff, advocated bombing non-military targets as a way of "hitting the wealth of the industrialists and fat cats,"[29] goals which disturbed at least one journalist as "Marxist."[30] Further, despite claiming to intervene for humanitarian reasons, NATO never had the support of the UN, which created another disconnect between the professed objectives and the perceived situation.

For many in the news media and in the public, the question remains, what were NATO's objectives. A well-planned PA strategy, in congruence with NATO objectives, could have answered this question early in the conflict and allowed everyone from the politicians to the PAOs to remain on message.

Notes

[1] Clausewitz, p. 87
[2] The White House, *A National Security Strategy for a New Century*, October 1998, 5.
[3] Joint Publication 3-61, *Doctrine for Public Affairs in Joint Operations*, 14 May 1997, vii.
[4] Major Mark Phillips and Capt. Ange Jaskiewicz, 2ND AEGNA/PA After Action Report, undated

Notes

[5] Captain Michael J. Paoli, 16 ASETF/PA After Action Report On JTF-Noble Anvil/Operation Allied Force 24 Mar - 20 Jun 1999, undated

[6] Ibid

[7] Ibid

[8] Shea, Reform Club Speech, 15 July 1999

[9] PA Summary, Joint Unit Lessons Learned, comments from Capt Troy Kitch, plans officer, Public Affairs Directorate, US Air Forces Europe, undated

[10] James A. Kitfield, *Command And Control: The Messenger* National Journal, Sept. 11, 1999, 2546

[11] Phillips and Jaskeiwicz

[12] Paoli

[13] PA Summary, Joint Unit Lessons Learned, comments from Lt Col Barbara A. Carr, deputy director, Public Affairs Directorate, US Air Forces Europe, undated

[14] Ibid

[15] Phillips

[16] Ibid

[17] "*Casualties of War*," Newsweek, 26 April 1999, 26-29

[18] Maj Gary Pounder, "Opportunity Lost: Public Affairs, Information Operations, and the Air War Against Serbia" (paper presented to staff, The College of Aerospace Doctrine, Research, and Education, n.d.

[19] Shea, Reform Club speech, 15 Jul 1999

[20] "Nato retracts media ultimatum", *BBC News*, Friday, 9 April, 1999, n.p.; on-line, Internet, available from http://news2.thls.bbc.co.uk/hi/english/world/europe/newsid%5F314000/314671.stm

[21] Stephens, 7

[22] Shea, Reform Club speech.

[23] Senate, *Hearing Of The Senate Armed Services Committee Subject: Lessons Learned From Military Operations And Relief Efforts In Kosovo*, 106th Congress, 14 October 1999.

[24] Rebecca Grant: "Airpower Made it Work." *AF Magazine*, Arlington VA, Nov. 1999, 30.

[25] John A. Tirpak, "Survey Shows NATO Close on Serb Damage Estimates," *AF Magazine*, Arlington VA, Nov. 1999, 13.

[26] Grant, 31.

[27] Kenneth H. Bacon, Assistant Secretary of Defense for Public Affairs, DoD News Briefing, Tuesday, March 23, 1999, n.p., on-line, Internet, available from http://www.defenselink.mil/news/Mar1999/t03231999_t0323asd.html

[28] John A. Tirpak, "Short's View of the Air Campaign", *AF Magazine*, Arlington VA, September. 1999, 43.

[29] Simon Jenkins, "Altitude sickness: The indiscriminate bombing in the Kosovo conflict was an act of terror." *London Times*, September 24, 1999, n.p., on-line, Internet, available from http://www.the-times.co.uk/cgi-bin/BackIssue?999

[30] Ibid

Part 3

Joint Vision 2010 and the New Media Battlefield

In war the will is directed at an animate object that reacts.

— Carl von Clausewitz

Joint Vision 2010 describes the operational concepts for warfighting in a "challenging and uncertain future" shaped by technology.[1] Stephens suggests overlaying communications strategies on the concepts in this doctrine, and develop strategies based on credible content, compelling context, competitive quality, ready accessibility, and interactivity.[2] Her ideas are noteworthy in that they recognize the changed face of news media reporting and the implications for the military. Conducting public affairs as usual—for instance, having the airmen at a deployed location produce a newsletter with dining hall hour—shows a military stuck in the mindset of a different century.

Credible content, ready accessibility. The basics of conducting a public information campaign have not changed. Let the reporters talk to the people doing the job. If they want information on command issues, they should be given access to the commander, and if they want to talk about maintaining aircraft, let them talk to a maintenance specialist. As Shea suggested, "the important thing is that…leaders go on TV and reach out."[3] In essence, a PAO who stands at the front gate and delivers the party line blocks the flow of information. These basics reflect the above-mentioned concepts of credible content and ready accessibility. Yet NATO managed to

violate even these basics. First, Shea mentioned in a speech after the war that both NATO and Pentagon officials scheduled their briefings so as to saturate the airwaves with NATO messages[4]. The media caught on quickly and despite being forced to accept the situation to both fill in airtime and attempt to glean any information, began to look for news elsewhere. The media also began to resent the heavy-handed approach, and several said they felt that if NATO had begun to suffer losses, the American public would have demanded more open access, which the military was no longer willing to provide.[5]

Milosevic gave the media what they wanted in terms of visuals, as well as controversy. When Clark shut off the access of media to all unit commanders but himself, he destroyed a sense of accessibility for many reporters, especially as he was then unable to devote any of his time in dealing with the media.[6] As Stephens points out, credible content is more than fact. It includes intangibles, such as whether the media or the viewer believes the messenger and the context of the messages.[7] By attempting to manipulate the media, NATO lost credibility, not only with the reporters but also with the publics they intended to reach, who saw a steady stream of "party line" commentary or routine backtracking. Credibility is not a renewable resource, and if the spokesmen at the top were losing their trustworthiness, everyone in the field was in danger of being, as one PAO put it, "painted with the same brush."[8]

Compelling context and competitive quality. The ides of compelling context and competitive quality are also important issues. Although the US and NATO, at least, developed official web pages, the content was limited for security reasons, and the emphasis was on hardware and operations, not people. One reason may have been the threats mentioned earlier, but people are drawn to stories about people, not aircraft. In this conflict, the other side had the most compelling visuals as well as the control over what was released. The media knew they

were being used but felt compelled to use the visuals that told at least one part of the story.[9] Here NATO was at a disadvantage because AWOS was a stand-off war with weapons shot largely from a distance, and the visual images we could provide were limited. Even such unprecedented media events as having reporters fly on a B-52 combat mission produced hardware-intensive visuals, not gripping stories of warriors risking their lives. Our visuals looked like corporate brochures, but the visuals orchestrated by the opposition were the story of a war, however one-sided.

Focus on the Internet The internet is rapidly becoming the focus of a generation, with news media and the general public looking to the web for information. Here again, NATO showed no strategy for the use of this emerging medium. The Serb government developed an English language-based internet site to counter NATO's information campaign, which Stephens says is "reminiscent of America's decision in 1942 that it needed German shortwave radio broadcasts to support its World War II campaign.[10] In short, they used our own strategy against us, taking advantage of the new technology, while we hesitated because of security concerns. Stephens further contends that "in addition to reaching individual users, a competitive news web site attracts foreign journalists."[11] At HQ USAFE, the public affairs office had one dedicated noncommissioned officer responsible for the command web page news content, but he was frequently sent on other assignments or had other duties to fulfill. This lack of commitment to the internet as a tool in an information campaign demonstrates a serious gap in the NATO strategy. Further, it shows clearly that future enemies will use emerging technology to conduct propaganda campaigns, and that we must begin to plan a counter offensive or at the very least a credible response option.

Fog and Friction

Clausewitz stated that "[t]he same political object can elicit *differing* reactions from different peoples, and even from the same people at different times."[12] This idea would have served as a good guiding principle for the NATO information planners. How will the political objective play in the US? In NATO countries? In Serbia and with its allies? How can we use information to generate the kind of response we want from each of these publics? And most importantly, in considering the reaction of opposition groups, Bass paraphrases Sun Tzu in what could be a direct challenge to NATO's business-as-usual attitude: "Know yourself, know the enemy, and know the difference!"[13] By not knowing the enemy, NATO was caught off guard by Milosevic's expert manipulation of the media. However, this points out a more serious flaw of the NATO effort.

Judging from the way the NATO public information campaign was conducted, one might assume that the planners approached the effort as an advertising campaign, or series of public service announcements, designed to raise awareness about the political issues. That Shea would admit to surprise about a Serb counterattack is tantamount to a politician being surprised that an opposition candidate would launch a campaign attacking his issues or character. NATO should have known early on that the most gripping visuals would come from the point of impact of its weaponry, not from the point of launch, and made plans to deal with this imbalance. After all, gun camera film shows off the explosions from precision guided munitions. Why would we not expect the other side to show to resultant misery, especially when such visuals help him earn his "underdog" status.

Further, as demonstrated by the case of the refugee convoy being struck, NATO had no plan for dealing with the aftermath of collateral damage. Part of the blame lies at the feet of the

public affairs offices of the warfighting units. One senior officer admitted that he had no PA plan for dealing with what he called "branches and sequels" of the actions of his unit.[14] His PAO owed him at least a generic plan, even if it were disapproved by higher headquarters as a draft. Nothing in the after action reports suggests that the wings or numbered air forces raised this issue and offered generalized statements or plans to deal with what are realistic expectations in combat.

For its part, NATO should accept the bulk of the blame for not offering guidance from the outset, and at the very least encouraging the warfighter-level PAOs to develop plans for addressing such issues.

Notes

[1] Joint Vision 2010, Joint Chiefs of Staff publication, Introduction page
[2] Stephens, 15
[3] Shea, speech
[4] Shea, speech
[5] Graham, quoted in Kitfield, "Command and Control The Messenger"
[6] Kitfield,
[7] Stephens, 16
[8] Carr
[9] Rowland
[10] Stephens, 23
[11] Ibid, 25
[12] Clausewitz, 81
[13] Bass, 37
[14] nonattribution

Part 4

Recommendations

We cannot be readily ruined by a single error, if we have made reasonable preparations.

— Carl von Clausewitz

"Information," says one researcher, "has never been more powerful."[1] Thus, the challenge to military planners is how best to harness the power of information. Two solutions emerge from reading after-action reports and from contemplating the changes being wrought on the military by the information age. The first is for the public affairs community to learn its own business, to learn how to plan an effective multifaceted information campaign which takes in account an adversary able to do the same. The second involves the emerging doctrine surrounding formation of an information operations cell.

As for the first solution, Shea was able to offer his own prescription for success, which, had it been followed in this conflict, would have provided the strategic framework necessary for successfully countering Milosevic's aymmetrical warfare. Shea recommended standing up a NATO Media Operations Center to plan, coordinate and deconflict events such as speeches made by heads of state; monitoring media both of NATO countries and the opponent's media; providing rebuttals or as the US military might say, correcting the record; serving as a liaison for SHAPE; and drafting, researching, analyzing and formulating messages.[2] Studying a political campaign would be a good start for anyone planning a military public information campaign. No

successful candidate could operate without a media operations center, and in fact EUCOM has a detailed directive for setting up just such a center.[3] Yet here was NATO with a small center, ill-equipped to handle the crush of media, which apparently never coordinated with the fielded PA forces or even the major commands involved in the conflict.

Strategic planning was the missing element in this conflict. As mentioned earlier, most of the PA practitioners knew what to do but not why they were doing it, and without a plan, they had too many targets and too many options to concentrate their efforts for "effects-based targeting." No PA practitioner should have deployed in theater without a comprehensive set of theater-specific guidance in hand. Further, everyone should have known the PA structure in theater and had a list of contact names and numbers so that everyone was, as they say, singing from the same sheet of music.

The heart of having a strategic plan is providing commander's intent to the people in the field. The Army incorporates commander's intent into every plan, and each soldier is expected to know the intent for his commander and one level above that. The Air Force has begun to incorporate commander's intent into the air operations planning process[4], and the PA community should take this joint concept and incorporate commander's intent into every guidance message. This would take PA guidance the additional step from a tactical blueprint to a roadmap that synchronizes the PA community's effort into the JFC's operation. In addition, providing commander's intent would alert the PA professional in the field to the theater commander's strategy and prevent the US-only, or MAJCOM-only emphasis evident in this operation, which created the backlash where US public affairs efforts were scaled back to avoid overwhelming the NATO flavor of the operation.

Further, PAG which is written in congruence with a JFC's strategic plan gives PAOs a better platform on which to stand when presenting PA tactical plans to field commanders. The commander will recognize the JFC's intent in the guidance, which will help the PA relate the information plan to the operational plans. This might reduce one problem, that of commanders at various levels not accepting or incorporating advice from their PAOs.

The public affairs effort should be as pro-actively waged as is the military campaign. PAOs should assess the adversary as thoroughly as a fighter pilot assesses an enemy, and should anticipate the adversary's moves. To be pro-active, PAOs should emphasize the reality of warfare and de-emphasize the surgical strike capability of precision guided weapons which leaves the public with an impression that warfare is bloodless and our munitions perfectly accurate. Also, the PA community should understand that media need pictures, and that pictures will most often come from gun camera film. PAOs at the highest levels should arrange, before hostilities, a mechanism for obtaining gun camera film for public release, knowing that this kind of imagery will be in demand immediately following any incident. A proactive plan will anticipate the media interest and availability at forward locations and apportion people and other resources appropriately.

The second solution, one being advocated by many in the military, is to integrate public affairs into the newly-developed information operation cells[5]. The arguments in favor are strong, but so are the arguments against integrating public affairs into an organization with the people conducting psychological operations and deception programs. As has been stated earlier, and cannot be emphasized enough, credibility is key to a successful public information campaign.

However, coordination with an IO cell might provide public affairs with a way to obtain gun camera and satellite imagery, for instance, for public release by working with the intelligence

and operations communities.[6] The IO cell might also be able to provide analysis of foreign media, including internet sites produced by the adversary, which the PA community is not staffed or equipped to provide. This kind of analysis is often performed by the Foreign Service Office public information staff, but a coordinated effort with military planners who deal with signals intelligence might be a true force multiplier.

Still, the strongest arguments for integrating PA into the IO cell seem more to be admonitions for PA to learn its own business and apply the rules of a successful public relations campaigns to a military campaign.[7] Public affairs and the IO cell should perhaps coordinate closely without being tied too closely. The process of integrating or coordinating PA and IO is an area that should be explored in more detail, and some work has begun on this subject.[8] As an emerging concept, it deserves considerable debate and research.

Notes

[1] Bass, 29
[2] Shea, speech
[3] Headquarters European Command Directive 55-11, *Joint Task Force headquarters Policies, Procedures and Organization*, n.d.
[4] Joint Publication 1, Joint Warfare of the Armed Forces of the United States, 10 January 1995, IV-2.
[5] Joint Publication 3-13, Information Operations
[6] Pounder,
[7] Ibid
[8] Ibid

Part 5

Conclusion

> *Public sentiment is everything. With public sentiment, nothing can fail; without it nothing can succeed.*
>
> — Abraham Lincoln, 1858

The PA operation in Kosovo was a lesson in how not to conduct an information campaign. The guidance was a boilerplate annex slapped into an operations order, and no strategy appeared to exist to served as a roadmap, telling people where to go and what to accomplish once they got there. All future conflict will be shaped by the "CNN effect," asymmetric warfare, and changes in the information age that may be too rapid for the military to keep up with. Our defenses are truth, credibility, and strategic planning, but we need to develop an attack strategy to complement the defense.

As Admiral Ellis commented in his after action report, referring to the information campaign:

> The enemy was much better at this than we were...and far more nimble. The enemy deliberately and criminally killed innocents by the thousands, but no one saw it...We accidentally killed innocents, sometimes by the dozens, and the world watched on the evening news. We were continuously reacting, investigating, and trying to answer 'how could this happen?'[1]

With a strategic plan, including an analysis of the adversary and the changing information environment, we would have understood the consequences of an over-the-horizon war and the reaction of both the enemy and the media, and been able to anticipate and plan for worst-case

scenarios. Instead, we relied on a handful of tactics that had worked more-or-less effectively in conflicts past, in a completely different environment, and wondered why we could not achieve a coordinated objective.

As Shea commented after the war, "winning the media campaign is just as important as winning the military campaign—the two are inseparable-you can't win one without the other."[2] No country or in this case, alliance, would enter an engagement without a strategic and operational objective, a planning cell, and a joint forces commander, and yet we tried to fight an informational campaign without any of these components visibly in place.

This research was conducted with archived yet largely raw information from in theater and as such, only begins to scratch the surface of the Air War Over Serbia. While interviews with key personnel are available, the focus of the questions was seldom on the informational aspects of this campaign, and more thorough research would focus on this missing element. More comprehensive research into NATO and national documents from each of the participating countries might reveal the information campaign in a totally different light, and because of the limited nature of research for this paper, is highly recommended.

Notes

[1] Ellis,
[2] Shea, speech

Appendix A

Planning Checklist: Recommendations Encapsulated

1. Stand up a media center at the appropriate level as quickly as possible. This center serves to centralize control of all public affairs related efforts, provides a single point of contact to resolve issues and answer questions, and ensures all PAOs in theater are working from the same guidance. The media center must provide to the field commander's intent for the public information campaign.

2. The combined or joint media center should maintain a current list of all PA points of contact with a chain of command structure delineated, as well as media POCs applicable to the situation (in and out of theater).

3. Ensure all PA guidance contains theater-level guidance or a POC to obtain such guidance, and instructs any PAO deploying into the theater to obtain a copy of the latest guidance and adhere to it.

4. Media center, JFC or supporting command PA offices should ensure PA coordination with the applicable IO cell, even if not fully integrated. PA and IO must be aware of each other's activities and goals.

5. PA should be as pro-active as possible, anticipating the needs of media for visual products, and arrange for the resources needed. A pro-active stance also requires the PA community to know the adversary as much as any combatant in the conflict can.

Glossary

16 ASETF	16th Air and Space Expeditionary Task Force
2nd AEGNA	2nd Air Expeditionary Group, Noble Anvil
AFFOR	Air Force Forces (subordinate to a task force or air expeditionary group commander)
AWOS	Air War Over Serbia (subset of Allied Force)
CINCEUR	Commander in Chief, European Command (US)
EUCOM	European Command (US)
JFC	Joint Forces Commander, responsible for all operations in theater
JTF Shining Hope	Joint Task Force Shining Hope, the humanitarian assistance effort conducted as a parallel operation to the Air War Over Serbia part of Allied Force
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
Noble Anvil	Code name for NATO combat operations in Kosovo and Serbia, part of Allied Force
PA	Public affairs
PAG	Public affairs guidance
PAO	Public affairs officer
RAF	Royal Air Force (UK)
SHAPE	Supreme Headquarters, Allied Powers Europe (NATO headquarters)
USAFE	US Air Forces in Europe

Definitions:

"CNN Effect." Usually meant to convey the sense of policy being driven by the images seen on the news, specifically on the 24-hour news stations such as CNN which repeat an image or idea throughout the day, often molding public opinion.

Bibliography

Air War Over Serbia Terms of Reference. Headquarters USAFE Studies and Analysis Directorate. 25 October 1999

Bacon, Kenneth H. Assistant Secretary of Defense for Public Affairs, DoD News Briefing, Tuesday, March 23, 1999, n.p., on-line, Internet, available from http://www.defenselink.mil/news/Mar1999/t03231999_t0323asd.html

Bass, Col Carla D. "Building Castles on Sand: Underestimating the Tide of Information Operations." *Airpower Journal* XII, no. 2 (Summer 1999): 27-48.

Carr, Lt Col Barbara, deputy director, USAFE Public Affairs Directorate. To Maj Gary Pounder, USAF CADRE. E-mail, undated.

Clausewitz, Carl Von. *On War*, Edited and translated by Michael Howard and Peter Paret. Princeton NJ,; Princeton University Press, 1984.

Diamond, Dick. "Kosovo Lessons Learned Study Group Final Report," Raytheon Corporation Strategy & Assessments, 27 July 1999. Powerpoint.

Ellis, Admiral James O. "A View from the Top," Briefing. September 1999.

Grant, Rebecca. "Airpower Made it Work." *Air Force Magazine* 82, no. 11. (November 1999): 30-37.

Hatchett, Ron. "How Long Will He Last?" *The NewsHour with Jim Lehrer*.. On-line. Internet, 30 April 1999. Available from http://web-cr05.pbs.org/plweb-cgi/fastweb?getdoc+newshour+newshour+3083+0+wAAA+hatchett

Headquarters European Command Directive 55-11, *Joint Task Force Headquarters Policies, Procedures and Organization*, n.d.

Jenkins, Simon. "The indiscriminate bombing in the Kosovo conflict was an act of terror." *London Times*. On-line. Internet, 24 September 1999. Available from http://www.the-times.co.uk/cgi-bin/BackIssue?999

Joint Publication 1, *Joint Warfare of the Armed Forces of the United States*, 10 January 1995, IV-2.

Joint Publication 3-13, *Information Operations.*

Joint Publication 3-61, *Doctrine for Public Affairs in Joint Operations*, 14 May 1997.

Joint Vision 2010, Joint Chiefs of Staff publication, Introduction page.

Kitfield, James A. "Another Look at the Air War that Was." *Air Force Magazine* 82, no. 10. (October 1999): 39-43.

Kitfield, James, "*Command And Control: The Messenger.*" National Journal, 11 Sept 1999, 2546

"Kosovo background page." DefenseLink. On-line, Internet, undated available from http://www.defenselink.mil/specials/kosovo

"Media attacked over Kosovo campaign." *BBC.* On-line. Internet, 9 July 1999. Available from http://news2.thls.bbc.co.uk/hi/english/uk%5Fpolitics/newsid%5F389000/389910.stm.

Message, 200021Z MAR 99, Secretary of Defense, Standing Public Affairs Plan For Kosovo-Related Nato-Led Air Strikes. To units, 20 Mar 1999.

Message, 261546Z MAR 99, Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Public Affairs, Public Affairs Guidance On U.S. Participation In NATO Operation Allied Force. To units, 16 March 1999.

"Nato accused of media blunders." *BBC.* On-line. Internet, June 16, 1999. Available from http://news2.thls.bbc.co.uk/hi/english/world/europe/newsid%5F370000/370911.stm.

Osgood, John. "A Study of Clausewitz's Concept of the Military Centers of Gravity." On-line. Internet, 1998. Available from http://pw1.netcom.com/~jrosgood/wc4.htm.

PA Summary, Joint Unit Lessons Learned, comments from Capt Troy Kitch, plans officer, Public Affairs Directorate, US Air Forces Europe, undated.

Phillips, Maj Mark and Jaskiewicz, Capt Ange. "2ND AEGNA/PA After Action Report," undated.

Pounder, Maj Gary. "Opportunity Lost: Public Affairs, Information Operations, and the Air War Against Serbia." Paper presented to staff, The College of Aerospace Doctrine, Research, and Education, n.d.

Rowland, Jackie. "Propaganda battle over Kosovo." BBC. On-line. Internet,23 May 1999. Available from http://news2.thls.bbc.co.uk/hi/english/world/from%5Four%5Fown%5Fcorrespondent/newsid%5F350000/350707.stm

Shea, Dr. Jamie. "The Kosovo Crisis and the Media: reflections of a NATO Spokesman." Speech. Atlantic Council of the United Kingdom Reform Club, London, 15 July 1999.

Stephens, Connie L. "The Revolution in Media Affairs: Reinventing US Strategic Communications in the Era of Slobodan Milosevic." *Essays 1999*. Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Strategic Essay Competition. Washington DC, 1999.

Tirpak, John A. "Survey Shows NATO Close on Serb Damage Estimates." *Air Force Magazine* 82, no. 11. (November 1999): 13.

Tirpak, John A. "Short's View of the Air Campaign." *AF Magazine*, 82, no. 9, (September. 1999), 43-47.

US Senate, *Hearing of The Senate Armed Services Committee Subject: Lessons Learned From Military Operations And Relief Efforts In Kosovo*, 106th Congress, 14 October 1999.

White House. *A National Security Strategy for a New Century*. October 1998, 5.