

DOMINATING DUFFER'S DOMAIN



**Lessons for the
U.S. Army
Information
Operations
Practitioner**

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Published by the RAND Corporation, Santa Monica, Calif.

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Cover design and illustrations by Tanya Maiboroda.

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Preface

This report is written in the style and tradition of an important military teaching text: *The Defence of Duffer's Drift*.¹ Written by Major General Sir Ernest Swinton in 1904 based on his experience as a field-grade officer during the Boer War, *Duffer's Drift* became a military classic over the course of the following century because it so effectively taught principles of tactical defense. In Swinton's text, the fictional narrator, Lieutenant Backsight Foresight, experiences a series of six dreams; in each, he is charged with the same mission (the defense of Duffer's Drift), and in each (save the last) he fails spectacularly, though in new and different ways, having learned from each of the previous failures until he is finally, before awakening, successful.

The Defence of Duffer's Drift is still a relevant classic because of four features: (1) its simplistic style; (2) its satirical nature, which provides a humorous look at how not to employ one's troops; (3) how it shows the tactical principles in every operation; and (4) how it illustrates the tragic results of ignoring such principles.

We believe that using narrative to show what not to do, followed by a demonstration of the correct application of principles, is a particularly compelling and sound teaching method. Thus, for important rhetorical and pedagogical reasons, this document is different from most RAND publications. It follows narrative conventions and uses the vernacular language of its audience. We hope this *Duffer's Drift*-inspired text does for information operations what the original did for defensive tactics: Effectively communicate timeless principles while also persuading readers of "the tragic results of ignoring such principles."²

The target audience for this piece of instructional fiction is soldiers with current or future IO responsibilities and at least some understanding of Army brigade combat team staffing processes, from sergeant through major. Secondary audiences include even more senior personnel with other staff roles (up to and including commanders) who may benefit from a better understanding of how IO should work and what it should contribute to planning and operations, as well as IO personnel from other services and from the militaries of partner countries.

This research was originally sponsored by the Combating Terrorism Technical Support Office on behalf of the Marine Corps Information Operations Center and conducted within the International Security and Defense Policy Center of the RAND National Defense

¹ Originally published by Ernest Dunlop Swinton, *The Defence of Duffer's Drift*, London: W. Clowes and Sons, 1904, but republished in many forms since.

² In addition to the long legacy of the original (still used in military education and training today), numerous *Duffer's Drift*-inspired texts have emerged and have proven useful training aides in a number of military specialties, including tactical counterinsurgency, tactical urban operations, and logistics. See for example, Russell W. Glenn, *An Attack on Duffer's Downtown*, Santa Monica, Calif.: RAND Corporation, P-8058-1, 2001; Reginald Scott, *The Defense of Duffer's Drift Brigade Support Area*, Washington, D.C.: U.S. Army, Institute of Land Warfare, 2001; and Center for Army Lessons Learned, *Nightmare on Wazir Street*, Newsletter 08-39, June 2008.

Research Institute, a federally funded research and development center sponsored by the Office of the Secretary of Defense, the Joint Staff, the Unified Combatant Commands, the Navy, the Marine Corps, the defense agencies, and the defense Intelligence Community.

The Army advocate for this report is the U.S. Army Force Modernization Proponent Center, Information Operations Proponent. The conversion to Army vernacular and emphasis and the publication of this version were sponsored by the U.S. Army and conducted within the RAND Arroyo Center's Strategy, Doctrine, and Resources Program. RAND Arroyo Center, part of the RAND Corporation, is a federally funded research and development center sponsored by the United States Army.

The Project Unique Identification Code (PUIC) for the project that produced this document is RAN167283.



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Executive Summary

This is the account of a fictitious narrator, U.S. Army Captain Imogene N. Hindsight, as she dreams of planning and integrating information operations (IO) in support of a mission in the notional country of Atropia. It intentionally mirrors the narrative style of the classic *The Defence of Duffer's Drift* and documents Captain Hindsight's efforts, and the things that go wrong, over the iterative course of six dreams. Hindsight offers the lessons she learns from these failures and shows how she incorporates the lessons from each consecutive dream before failing again. By the end of the sixth dream, Hindsight succeeds because she has learned 26 hard-won lessons that readers may find useful for the future conduct and planning of IO.

The principles espoused here were derived from nearly a decade of research on IO by the lead author. These principles were selected from a longer list of candidate lessons in consultation with several IO professionals. We have chosen not to provide source citations for each lesson, both to adhere to the stylistic conventions of *Duffer's Drift* and to allow readers to make up their own minds about the utility of the lessons. Ultimately, instructional fiction in this style is successful when the elements of the vignettes ring true to the reader as things that could happen and when the lessons offered are credible as effective solutions not only to the challenges faced by the fictional narrator but also to that class of problem, should something similar ever beset the reader. The elements of the instructional vignettes themselves are drawn from events that have occurred during actual historical operations, could have occurred in those operations, or were identified through wargaming, contingency planning, or (yes) hindsight.

Captain Hindsight's 26 lessons are as follows:

1. Effective information operations cannot be an afterthought. If IO is part of planning, it is more likely to be part of the plan.
2. If effects in and through the information environment are important to the commander, they should feature prominently in commander's intent.
3. Maneuver and fires generate effects in the information environment, too.
4. Plan for friendly-force mistakes and adversary propaganda.
5. All communications are potentially global. What you do and say here can have effects elsewhere, and vice versa.
6. IO is like fire-support coordination; it is an integrating function, not itself an information-producing/affecting capability.
7. One information-related capability by itself produces minimal effects and risks being overwhelmed by others or other lines of operation.
8. Information-related capabilities that are not part of the scheme of IO may still be active; ensure that all information-related capability operators are aware of IO plans and that all plans are deconflicted, at a minimum.

9. Information-related capabilities can have lengthy timelines, for both execution and results.
10. Events do not always unfold according to plan, so prepare IO branches and sequels.
11. Warfare—including information warfare—involves trade-offs.
12. The efforts planned and coordinated by IO need to be monitored and assessed; otherwise, you're shooting in the dark.
13. IO is not well understood in the force.
14. Success in IO requires prioritizing intelligence support for IO.
15. IO objectives must be clear and precise.
16. Good deeds do not speak for themselves.
17. Do not assume that changing attitudes will change behaviors.
18. Consider the information environment from the population's perspective.
19. Things do not always happen for the reasons you think; causation can be complicated when behaviors, perceptions, cognition, and culture are involved.
20. Fail fast. Quickly try, quickly monitor results, and quickly adjust assumptions and efforts accordingly.
21. Every operation is an information operation.
22. IO can deliver effects on enemy forces and commanders, as well as on civilian populations.
23. Adversaries can do things that you cannot. Be prepared for them.
24. Information-related capabilities that are not well integrated with operations are vulnerable to being overwhelmed.
25. It can take years to build credibility but only minutes to tear it down.
26. Sometimes, the most important effect in or through the information environment is the one you avoid.



Abbreviations

AO	area of operations
BCT	brigade combat team
CAT	civil affairs team
COA	course of action
D-day	the unnamed day on which a particular operation commences or is to commence
H-hour	the specific hour on D-day at which a particular operation commences
IO	information operations
IOFC	Information Operations Fundamentals Course
IRC	information-related capability
MISO	military information support operations
MTOE	modified table of organization and equipment
NCO	noncommissioned officer
OPSEC	operations security
POTUS	President of the United States of America
S-2	intelligence staff officer, staff section
S-3	operations staff officer, staff section
SITREP	situation report



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Foreword

We'd been in the field almost ten weeks straight preparing our Stryker BCT for yet another rotation at the Joint Readiness Training Center. But there's no rest for the weary: As soon as we returned from the field, the BCT began preparing for deployment. We spent the next two weeks in a blur of 18-hour workdays, packing, loading, and shipping out, one battalion after another. As the junior captain on the BCT staff—and therefore everyone's favorite gofer—I was exhausted. Deploying with the last element of the brigade staff, I took my seat in the aircraft, buckled up, and was fast asleep before the wheels were up.

During the flight to Louisiana, I had a curious sequence of six dreams. In each, I was the IO staff officer for the BCT at the beginning of an operation. The location and operations were the same in each dream, but I had no recollection of previous dreams other than specific lessons learned from my errors in judgment. In each subsequent dream I thus fared slightly better, until I was eventually able to succeed in carrying out my role in providing IO support to the mission.

The location of the dreams was unrecognizable to me and was both perfectly realistic and wholly unlike anywhere I have ever been. I will therefore refer to our area of operations as “Atropia” and its aggressive neighbor as “Ariana,” drawing from the names of the host nation and the opposing force used in instructional exercises at the JRTC and so painfully familiar to many of my fellow soldiers.

I was able to recall the entire sequence when I woke from the final dream, remembering not just the valuable lessons but also the experiences that had led me to learn them. I have faithfully recorded these dreams here in the hope that others might benefit from them. I have gone back through these accounts and expanded most of the many acronyms that I used so that a reader with a different background than my own might more easily follow my account.

I. N. Hindsight
CPT, SC (FA30)





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A Failure to Plan Information Operations

I felt a little useless, watching the rest of the brigade staff scurrying about in such an active frenzy. The BCT was set in a temporary forward staging base near the capital city's international airport and the MDMP (Military Decision Making Process) was in high gear. We were to conduct a humanitarian assistance and disaster relief mission in response to massive flooding along the coastal areas of the country. The mission also included partnering with host-nation forces to deter aggression from Atropia's neighbor—the country of Ariana. The humanitarian crisis in Atropia was just the sort of excuse the Arianans had been looking for, and they were threatening to use the pretext of “defending” ethnic Arianans from imagined persecution by Atropians as justification for a land grab.

Things were pretty hectic throughout the staff right then—feverish planning and little sleep as the intelligence preparation of the battlefield, scheme of maneuver, coordination of fires, and such were hammered out. I, on the other hand, felt somewhat out of the loop. When the latest MTOE changes went into effect this year, the brigade lost its IO planner billet. The BCT executive officer gave me responsibility for IO as an additional duty and had me attend the one-week Information Operations Fundamentals Course. If anyone on the staff was prepared to write the IO appendix, I was. However, IO wasn't exactly the commander's priority—in fact, writing up the IO appendix to the operations order was something I did entirely on my own—and I think the S-3 was sort of surprised that I did it. And, to be frank, it wasn't that hard. Admittedly, it wasn't the most substantial document in the world. I pretty much copied and pasted the Annex B intelligence section on the enemy situation, the friendly situation was somewhat notional, and the scheme of IO was only a paragraph, with no phases. It was, however, beautifully formatted, and the task listing covered all the main IRCs: military deception, electronic warfare, OPSEC (operations security), MISO (military information support operations), and so on. It looked very professional.

So I had plenty of time to get ready before the BCT would move out. No doubt once the operation began I would be very busy coordinating and liaising and whatnot, so I took time now to eat, work out, catch up on rack time—to get myself ready. When H-hour on D-day finally came, I along with everyone else in the brigade main command post eagerly awaited the news as the first of our battalions crossed the last standing bridge leading into the coastal lowlands of Atropia and moved into its AO (area of operations).

In less than an hour, we received word that the lead company was in contact with hostile forces. Two nights earlier, reconnaissance showed that there was an unoccupied complex of buildings near the far side of the bridge, but as the battalion crossed over, small-arms and rocket fire was reported coming from these buildings. Intelligence had indicated that there was the possibility of local extremists who were friendly to the Arianan cause, and the battalion's response to them was swift. The Strykers' 50-caliber machine guns and Mk19 40-mm grenade

launchers gave those hostiles two equally unpleasant things to think about and silenced them almost instantly. Grins were fierce inside the command post.

The grins disappeared as the reports rolled in. My heart sank after the soldiers dismounted and moved into the complex. On site, they discovered that they had just obliterated a wedding—the gunfire and “rockets” were celebratory, not hostile. More SITREPs (situation reports) came in—two dead; no, three dead. Finally, there was confirmation of five local civilians dead, three of them children, and at least 19 civilians wounded, with some having fled the scene. I grew sick to my stomach as I thought about how we—how I—had failed to think through coordination with the local government, how the focus of planning had been the scheme of the maneuver and force protection, with no thought to the possible effects in and through the information environment. It was my job to think about how information effects could support or undermine our operations and to insist that others on the staff give them due consideration. I had completely failed.

That was a long, awful night, and the next day was worse. BBC and other news outlets were broadcasting a constant stream of increasingly horrible stories and images. The District Administrator released a statement condemning “the violent attack on the peace-loving people” of his district, characterizing it as an attack orchestrated by the ethnically Atropan capital. Mobile-phone footage emerged of “the Wedding Massacre,” as it became known, with one central image dominating: a shrieking, sobbing mother on her knees, clutching the shattered body of her child while she rocked back and forth, blood staining her robe and streaking her hands.

That was always the thing I came back to—that woman holding her child’s body and the raw agony of her wails. There were other outcomes of course, worse and worse in terms of the mission. A regional extremist group, *The Truth*, immediately launched a highly effective propaganda campaign, using the Wedding Massacre as proof of the central government’s ill will toward ethnic Arianans and an American role in support of genocide. As international condemnation rolled in, the BCT received orders to pull out just as the insurgency picked up steam and Arianan forces massed at the border. Not four hours after the last soldiers embarked, an Arianan mechanized battalion crossed into Atropan to establish an “ethnic justice and protection zone” in the district. Given the low international (and domestic) opinion of the United States and the U.S. Army, this was widely seen as a justified act.

As bad as all that was—and I was now painfully aware of the strategic consequences of our, of *my*, failure—I kept coming back to the woman on her knees, with her child’s blood all over her. I would be trying to sleep, to eat, and there she was again, sobbing and rocking. Those were some of the worst weeks of my life, and perhaps no moment was more excruciating than waiting my turn to meet with the BCT commander and listening while the S-3 was chewed out six ways to Sunday. I couldn’t hear the exact words, but the cadence was unmistakable, and then it was my turn. I don’t remember all that the commander had to say. I was locked up at the position of attention staring straight ahead so long I started to lose my balance. All I really remember him telling me was how disappointed he was in choosing me to be the IO officer and how he had needed someone to “make the case for IO, come hell or high water.”

Lessons from the First Dream

As I faded from dreaming back toward sleeping, I reflected on this terrible experience, gathering the following observations and lessons:

- 1. Effective information operations cannot be an afterthought. If IO is part of planning, it is more likely to be part of the plan.**

My IO plan had been insubstantial and not an important part of the operation's plan. No one on the staff, including myself and the other officers responsible for IRCs, had given serious consideration to IO issues. I should have been more thoughtful about possible effects in and through the information environment, and I should have been more assertive about this relationship when communicating with the rest of the staff.

- 2. If effects in and through the information environment are important to the commander, they should feature prominently in commander's intent.**

The BCT staff and the commander were focused on fire and maneuver and not much else. I should have found a way to force cognitive and information considerations into the planning process. If commander's intent had included anything about the information environment, more of the staff would have been more likely to focus on IO issues. Since the commander didn't state his intent for IO, I should have offered a list of possibilities for consideration and pushed the S-3 for a clear statement of the desired information end state.

- 3. Maneuver and fires generate effects in the information environment, too.**

I failed to arrange for messaging or broadcasts to accompany or precede our entry operations, and our actions ended up speaking for themselves. In fact, those actions ended up having a much greater impact on the information environment than any traditional IRC (like electronic warfare or MISO) was likely to have had. Every soldier on the ground is a potential source of influence (positive or negative). I should have arranged to support movement into the AO with efforts to accommodate the civilian presence, and I should have found some way to prepare our soldiers to balance the need for force protection with the need to maintain goodwill.

- 4. Plan for friendly-force mistakes and adversary propaganda.**

Some mistakes can be avoided, but some are unavoidable. The BCT made a grievous mistake in firing on the wedding, but we were also unprepared for the ripple effect of propaganda and media reporting. I should have made sure that there were response and mitigation plans to cover a range of possible crises, accidents, and mistakes. These plans should have included timelines, designated spokespersons, and preapproved messages, at least.

- 5. All communications are potentially global. What you do and say here can have effects elsewhere, and vice versa.**

Our mistakes quickly resounded throughout Atropia and around the world. The effects of that local tragedy brought us local, national, and international condemnation and ended our

mission in failure practically before it had begun. I need to remember that the stakes are high in IO and that communication technology knows no boundaries. News, good or bad, can go viral in minutes, and our adversaries will exploit the worst of it to their maximum advantage.

This IO Stuff Is Harder Than It Looks

The details of the first dream faded from memory, leaving only the five lessons I had intuited behind. I tossed in my sleep and slipped into a second, similar dream. Again I dreamed of the humanitarian crisis in Atropia, the threat of invasion from Ariana, and the BCT sent in to provide both humanitarian and security cooperation support. While the exact same operational details all seemed new and fresh to me, the difference was that I had retained the lessons of the previous dream—most powerfully, the need to integrate IO with broader planning.

Thoroughly convinced of the importance of the information environment to the mission, I set to the task of inserting myself, and IO, into the planning process with the intention of it receiving the same level of consideration as fires and maneuver. This was no easy task, though. I was not an expected regular at operational planning team meetings, and as a newcomer and a junior captain it was not easy for me to get attention. The S-3 showed little patience with me, suggesting that I convene my IO working group somewhere else and limit my input to a few summary slides. I agreed that I would do so but respectfully and forcefully requested continued regular participation in the operational planning team because IO planning—or failing to plan—could be just as consequential for this mission as maneuver and force protection. To my pleasant surprise, the staff intelligence officer, the S-2, spoke up on my behalf. While the planning lead gave me a look that let me know I needed to be careful about overstepping my bounds, we agreed on the need to integrate IO into the overall planning process, and not just as a parallel effort to provide input to proposed courses of action. Ultimately, some of the information environment–related language I suggested ended up making it into the BCT concept of operations and the revised statement of commander’s intent.

I was frantically busy from there like the rest of the BCT staff. I gathered reps from the various IRCs to be part of the IO working group so I could tell them what I needed from each of them. Working with the S-2 section, we were able to set up a red cell with some of our more creative NCOs to wargame possible contingencies during initial entry and follow-on operations. I tasked the public affairs officer with working on response plans and sharing some of the contingencies we’d red-teamed. He agreed (somewhat stiffly, I thought) and said he’d done that sort of thing before. He said he would put together a package. It would include a response plan and message templates, which would lay out a phased timeline for gathering and releasing information during and after the start of operations. In support of that effort, I pushed for combat camera elements to be attached to each battalion, not only to document events but also to give public affairs the imagery and evidence they might need for possible responses. I didn’t want the arrival of soldiers to be too much of a surprise to the locals, so I instructed the MISO detachment commander to arrange for a forward presence to broadcast and inform the local population of both our arrival and our good intentions, encouraging support for our efforts.

It was a humanitarian mission, after all, and while OPSEC remained an important consideration, it obviously needed to take a backseat to establishing good relations.

Since there were no IO planners at the battalion level, I got a ride over to 1st Battalion's command post to make sure they were on board with the plan. The S-3 was annoyed but grudgingly gave me time to talk with his battle captains and the company commanders. We talked through the scheme of IO for the operation, what came out of the red cell wargaming, and went over possible contingencies. Although I was pretty tired, I was able to capture the company commanders' attention, and their sharp questions made me feel like the trip was worth the time.

Because of that meeting, I identified one more thing I could do—a masterstroke, I thought. We were going to take the initiative in the information environment and help shape the narrative. I sat down with a staff officer who said he was fluent in the local language, and we ginned up short, one-page handbills that the soldiers could hand out to the locals if needed. It explained our purpose as legitimate defenders of the country, sanctioned and invited by the government, prepared to defend the freedom and rights of the people, and just generally be the good guys. I found a printer that wasn't too busy, printed off a few hundred, and delivered them to the company first sergeants myself.

I was exhausted by this point, and we hadn't even crossed the line of departure yet. But at the same time I was very satisfied. I'd made sure that IO had been a consideration during planning, that we were ready with an information response should there be an accident or surprise, and that IRCs were on board and would execute. I'd even rolled up my sleeves and engaged directly with the lead battalion, involving them in the scheme of IO and supporting them with a handbill. I was up for two days straight at the end, but it was worth it to have the BCT set up for success.

That being said, the pucker factor got pretty high early in the operation when word came in that there was small-arms and rocket fire coming from a (previously) empty complex of buildings near the bridge. At this point, the refined vision in commander's intent started to pay off. Understanding the importance of relationships with Atropia's local population, the battalion held off response fires, and soon it became apparent that the weapons and "rocket fire" were actually celebratory rifles and fireworks at a wedding. I got more than one nod from other staff members at that moment. The wedding party panicked at the sight of advancing Strykers and fled, but we had just avoided a potential disaster of epic proportions. My pleasure was tempered by a sobering "what if," though—I couldn't help but think about how awful that could have turned out if we hadn't taken a comprehensive view of desired outcomes in planning. I was also a little irked. Why was the local wedding party panicking at our presence? Hadn't they received the message that we were coming and that we were the good guys?

Things had gone well so far. The mission was under way without any serious incidents. But I was concerned about the MISO effort. I had been quite proud of myself for insisting on MISO tasks both prior to and concurrent with the commencement of operations. I knew that my handbills alone wouldn't be enough, so I had asked for the full array of broadcasts, both loudspeakers and radio, to help communicate our intentions to the locals and get a head start on positive influence. But when I checked in with the MISO detachment, things weren't going so well. To start with, some of the ideas I'd pushed on them were outside the range of their preapproved series and products; they had been working with the MISO officer at division headquarters, but the operation was under way and they still didn't have approval for the new messages and products. They had prepared some broadcasts to inform the local popula-

tion of our arrival and intention, but those transmissions had been delayed until H-hour due to OPSEC concerns. Obviously, you can't both keep operational details undisclosed and tell locals when, where, and why the force will show up. The MISO commander tried to notify me about the problem (since both OPSEC and MISO are traditional elements of IO, their deconfliction should have been my responsibility), but they couldn't find me. Apparently, the issue came up when I was printing up the handbills. With the broadcast delayed until H-hour and no approvals for specific new series or products, MISO was using what was preapproved, but even that wasn't going too well; it appeared that their radio broadcasts were being intermittently jammed. How was that even possible, I wondered, given potential enemy capabilities?

Of course it was not the enemy. Or, rather, we became our own enemy. It had not occurred to me to talk with the electronic warfare officer to deconflict our efforts. As a result, electronic warfare assets were inadvertently jamming the frequencies being used by MISO broadcasts. Thankfully, MISO used its loudspeakers instead. Also, word came back to us that soldiers were able to pass out handbills to locals who showed up to watch our arrival. My guilt over failing to coordinate approval and deconfliction for MISO was somewhat ameliorated. So, while things had not been perfect, on the balance, it had gone well.

Or not. The next day, the BCT S-3 tracked me down, furious about the lack of coordination for MISO. Had I thought about deconflicting MISO and electronic warfare so that the MISO broadcasts weren't blocked? No sir. Had it occurred to me to talk to MISO before producing my own unauthorized MISO products in the form of handbills? No sir. Did I realize that maybe it would be a good idea to make sure that anything handed out in writing matched what was being broadcast over loudspeakers? Yes sir. Did I really think it was a good idea to send the populace mixed messages? No sir. Did it maybe make sense for the commander to have some say—maybe even the *final* say—in how we shaped the information environment and that maybe public affairs, MISO, and IO planning ought to be coordinated? Sir, yes sir.

I felt like a complete fool for my failure in this, but at the same time, the S-3's white-faced fury seemed a little over the top. That was until I found out just how wrong my "masterstroke" had gone. The officer who had helped me with translation didn't tell me that the local language was diglossic—the formal written and local spoken versions were so different as to be almost separate languages. The vast majority of locals couldn't read the formal written language and



couldn't read the handbills. The educated few could read them, though, which presented a further problem. What was written on the handbills didn't match the MISO and public affairs messages: I had stressed our legitimacy acting on behalf of the central government and our role in protecting freedom and liberty. It turns out that neither Atropians nor Arianans were particularly keen on American-style freedoms and liberty. Further, since the local ethnic Arianans mistrusted the central government, I had portrayed us as essentially hired mercenary bad guys to that segment of the population. Still worse, it turns out that the officer who helped me with translation had done a master's thesis on the holy text of the region and was heavily influenced by the style and imagery of that text. The local literate population interpreted the handbills as mocking or aping their holy text—a mark of disrespect.

Of course, the BBC, Al Jazeera, CNN, etc., were all soon running with headlines like "U.S. Army Insults Local Faithful." Public affairs responded quickly and capably, employing combat camera footage of soldiers on the ground clearly showing caution and concern in avoiding civilian injury. Such imagery was persuasive to the Western world—locally, not so much. The regional extremist group *The Truth* made hay with the handbill, and soon local protest activity was rising. And because I had put MISO and public affairs so far behind the power curve, they were in consequence management/reaction mode for weeks, effectively hamstringing the BCT's ability to carry out its humanitarian mission.

I never got to see that, of course. On D+6 I was officially relieved of my duties and by D+12 I was flying back to Joint Base Lewis-McChord. That was about as bad a day as I can remember, waiting for what felt an eternity (and what felt like the strangest sense of *déjà vu*) to see the BCT commander, to then be summarily chewed out for what felt like an hour. The cherry on top of all this was having an attorney appointed for me when I got back to home station. My handbills, being neither an approved MISO product nor part of command information, may also have been illegal, making me subject to prosecution.

Lessons from the Second Dream

Before the dream faded, I had the opportunity to reflect back on my painful experience. I found the following lessons:

6. IO is like fire-support coordination; it is an integrating function, not itself an information-producing/affecting capability.

I realized that much of my hard work had been misdirected. While my efforts ensuring the integration of IO in overall planning was time well spent, I had no business making handbills, and I had no business trying to tell MISO *their* business. I also had no business tasking public affairs. IO doesn't own any of the IRCs; I could ask public affairs but not *task* public affairs. I think that's why the public affairs officer was so short with me. IO should focus on objectives and effects, letting IRC experts tell IO officers what they can do and how they can contribute to achieving the objectives. I should have spent more time coordinating, integrating, deconflicting, and enabling the IRCs and less time trying to do it all myself.

7. One information-related capability by itself produces minimal effects and risks being overwhelmed by others or other lines of operation.

I had focused really heavily on MISO, and that was a good emphasis, but I also should have worked to coordinate with the other IRCs to make sure they were reinforcing and supporting the MISO messages instead of undermining them.

8. Information-related capabilities that are not part of the scheme of IO may still be active; ensure that all information-related capability operators are aware of IO plans and that all plans are deconflicted, at a minimum.

I had mistakenly thought that electronic warfare wouldn't be doing anything, since, I, the IO officer, hadn't asked them to do anything. That was a bad assumption. Electronic warfare is an IRC but may act independently of IO unless IO plans are shared across the staff and deliberate efforts are made to coordinate and deconflict capabilities. Similarly, I had decided to give MISO priority over OPSEC, but I hadn't taken the necessary steps to get that decision confirmed by the commander or the S-3 and built into the plan. Also, I wasn't around to champion my position when the OPSEC issue was raised because I was off freelancing MISO.

9. Information-related capabilities can have lengthy timelines, for both execution and results.

MISO was still waiting for approval of new products and series when 1st Battalion crossed the line of departure. MISO and other IRCs are relatively quick when working within preapproved parameters, but timelines can extend when going outside the bounds of what is preapproved. Similarly, the effects from most IRCs are not instantaneous; perceptions and behaviors do not immediately change upon receipt of a message. This seems obvious enough, but it can be less accepted among military operators when effects from maneuver and fires *are* instantaneous.

10. Events do not always unfold according to plan, so prepare IO branches and sequels.

The delays in MISO approvals and the accidental electronic warfare jamming of MISO made me think. Like all planned efforts, IO may not unfold exactly as intended. Even relatively simple deconfliction can be complicated if not scripted or prepared in advance. IO planners can't anticipate everything, but it is a good idea to have a few contingency plans and some alternative means of achieving the same effects.

11. Warfare—including information warfare—involves trade-offs.

I anticipated that we would sacrifice OPSEC for gains in goodwill with the local population. In fact, we ended up trading goodwill with the local population and local government for OPSEC and surprise. Sometimes you trade OPSEC for warning and instructing locals; sometimes you trade short-term security for long-term consequences; sometimes you trade effective fires against an important target for further alienating the local population; sometimes you trade an intel source for acting based on intel that you could have gained only from that source. Sometimes, you trade in the other direction. In the future, I will try to make those trade-offs consciously and in alignment with commander's intent.



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How Do We Know Whether We're Doing It Right?

As the details of the second dream slipped away from me, I was left only with the 11 lessons of the previous dreams. A new dream began, unfamiliar to me, but with all the same details now familiar to you: the BCT tasked with a humanitarian assistance and security cooperation mission in Atropia.

As the BCT prepared to conduct the mission, I threw myself into my work. My focus was now on ensuring that the information aspects of the mission received due attention. I worked with the operational planning team and engaged all the IRCs in and through the IO working group to make sure they had the support and guidance they needed, were aware of broader plans, and we coordinated and deconflicted in execution.

While I received some pushback from the planning lead, I was firm in my conviction of the importance of the information environment to this mission, and the importance of including IO considerations throughout the planning process, not just as a late addition or bolt-on to the fires process. With respect and confidence, I carried the day.

Public affairs produced contingency response and mitigation plans for a number of possible mishaps or adverse scenarios, which I made sure commanders and IRCs were aware of. I worked with the MISO detachment to identify opportunities to leverage their capabilities in support of the operation. I made suggestions, but some of those turned out to be poor ideas because of time constraints associated with their approval process. After listening to MISO's explanation of the process and timeline, I withdrew my suggestions and we considered alternatives. We discussed and arranged for a combat camera and MISO presence with the battalions. MISO had a robust selection of preapproved series and products that were appropriate for some of the things we wanted to accomplish in terms of notifying the locals of our arrival and intentions. During an IO working group meeting, the public affairs officer pointed out that we had more latitude for broadcasts that were not MISO products but just "command information"—straightforward facts from the commander suitable for any audience (U.S. domestic, press, or any foreign audience). The public affairs officer agreed to obtain the required approvals and to work with MISO to use their broadcast equipment. While we lacked U.S. Air Force aerial broadcast platforms like Commando Solo, I made a mental note to look into contracting with local media providers to leverage their radio and television broadcast capabilities at a future date. I also coordinated with division to make sure our themes and messages corresponded with what the Embassy was saying and what had been coming out of the regional combatant command. We worked with electronic warfare officers on electromagnetic spectrum operations to make sure that planned broadcast frequencies were free and would remain so. When I checked in with the combatant command J39 about MISO, I also checked that our IO plans nested well with their steady-state efforts and their specific efforts in support of the Atroplan crisis. I also made sure that there weren't other possible players I needed to coordinate with (such as the regional special operations command or a joint task force layer). The IO staff at the

combatant command was really helpful and gave me several folks to check in with periodically and keep on my cc line.

We also realized that it would be important to synchronize MISO with operations and the scheme of maneuver, both to allow MISO to physically deliver their message and to make sure maneuver and messaging were mutually reinforcing and contributing to commander's intent. Before we crossed the line of departure, I knew we had multiple IRCs ready to be employed and the requisite staff visibility on how those efforts could be mutually supporting. I had an interesting thought along those lines: What if we developed flyers that soldiers could hand out to the local populace? But I dismissed that immediately—my job was to synchronize IRCs, not be one myself. I suggested handbills to the head of the MISO detachment, and he indicated they already had a preapproved product ready to go. We reviewed it to make sure it fit with the other messages we were pushing out.

As we drew closer to D-day, both public affairs and MISO came to me with an issue that had come up: They were getting pushback on local broadcasts prior to crossing the line of departure due to OPSEC concerns. This was a valid concern; there was risk of action by local extremists, and that risk increased if the extremists had advance warning of our likely routes, destinations, and schedule. We discussed options in the IO working group, and then I elevated it to the operational planning team. In both conversations, I highlighted real risks on both sides: There was a potential cost in letting potential adversary groups know too much about our plans, but there was also a cost in failing to inform and prepare local citizens and local government representatives for our arrival. We worked out a number of possible COAs (courses of action). Our recommended COA balanced OPSEC and local warning with an embargo on information release until 48 hours before D-Day and restrictions on information specific to sites and times until H-hour. The operational planning team lead carried our recommended COA to the S-3 and the commander, and it was accepted with only minor modification. Locals (and potential adversaries) would know we were coming and why we were coming beginning two days before we started operations, but they wouldn't know exactly where and when we were coming. After wargaming the plan, we decided to add tactical deception to make it harder for nefarious actors to correctly determine where we would be operating. We had scout platoons recon routes we weren't using, combined with helicopter-borne demonstrations to multiple locations along alternative routes.

Movement into the coastal areas of Atropia went smoothly, and when things weren't smooth, contingency planning and coordination meant we could adjust on the fly to achieve commander's intent and minimize the impact of mishaps. The battalions were soon in their assigned AOs and established their forward operating bases, and we started to identify potential food and relief distribution sites. Simultaneously, we moved forward with plans to engage the Atropian forces in training exercises. That presented something of a challenge—central government forces weren't popular with the locals. Aware of this, public affairs and MISO were aggressive in countering everything the regional extremists put out, even when their statements had nothing to do with the BCT presence or our operations. I wondered if that might be somewhat counterproductive—like we were giving the extremists free airspace.

But overall things were going well, so I was unprepared when the executive officer asked me somewhat offhandedly, "So, are we really winning hearts and minds?" I started to list all the ways we had been active, particularly how active the CAT (civil affairs team) had been. The executive officer was surprised by that: Were civil affairs operations even an IRC? As we talked through the kind of intimate daily contact with locals that CATs had and how their efforts

impacted local perceptions and sentiment, he agreed that these operations constituted an IRC but still pushed: Is it working? I guess given how well things had gone, I had assumed we were being effective in shaping the information environment. But as we talked, it became clear that while we had a good handle on *performance* and nothing had gone obviously awry, I couldn't point with confidence to our *effectiveness*.

I realized we needed data to measure our effectiveness and started with the S-2. I was able to get a good picture of the enemy—Ariana's—order of battle, the regional and local extremist group's leadership, capabilities, and likely COAs. We also talked about the Atropian forces' capacity and equipment, but none of that really got to our progress in the humanitarian mission, how much our partners were absorbing, and whether that was deterring the Arianans. I needed more assessment data, but I cringed when I thought of what I'd heard about assessment teams whistling in from a higher headquarters and making pronouncements without ever really understanding the subordinate AO. I knew I needed something, but I knew I didn't need *that*.

I caught up with the exhausted CAT-B commander to talk about the relief effort. Again, it was an interesting conversation, and I got a lot of numbers (relief supplies delivered, distribution centers set up, extent of outreach and number of meetings with the local District Administrator's office) and a clear sense of what we were doing. But I had no sense of how effective we were. It was similar when I went to the Stryker battalions and asked about their partnering efforts. The battalion S-3s could tell me about the exercises they were running but could not really articulate any formal metrics for assessing effectiveness. They did offer their impressions, which I found somewhat worrisome: that they weren't getting the kind of engagement they hoped from partner forces, and enthusiasm was lacking. That prompted me to think about a comment from the CAT-B commander to the effect that there wasn't as much usage at the relief distribution centers as he expected, given how bad the flooding had been.

That was concerning. I realized that I needed to articulate my information needs to give meaningful information requirements to the S-2. I made more rounds—back to the planning staff, to the CATs, to the MISO detachment—and it became clear we couldn't explicitly tie our activities and immediate objectives to division's. The CAT-B commander made a good point: "You can't measure how well you're doing if you're not clear about what you're trying to do."

As the BCT continued to work hard, I struggled to put my finger on what, specifically, we were trying to achieve in terms of the local population and what we really needed to accomplish to deter the Arianans. And so I watched somewhat helplessly as things slowly, and somewhat mysteriously, deteriorated. Security cooperation exercises continued but with little observable impact on the readiness or posture of Atropian forces in the district. More and more displaced civilians poured into our AO, but at the same time there was no corresponding increase in activity at the disaster relief distribution sites: The misery index was going up. We also had cause to regret engaging the propaganda of *The Truth* so aggressively. We had in a way helped validate them as opponents, and as discontent increased among the local population, the extremists turned their focus from the central government to us. They got some traction, particularly after an incredibly unfortunate incident at an aid distribution site. A riot at a displaced-civilian camp, most likely orchestrated by extremists or maybe even Arianan provocateurs, resulted in an attack on relief workers and the Army platoon there.

As international criticism and media scrutiny of the mission increased, and more and more vocal concerns from Atropian outlets emerged, the Arianans massed a significant armored force on the border, putting POTUS in a bind. We had failed at the deterrence portion of our

mission. Because Atropian forces did not appear ready to repel an invasion on their own, the United States could either commit significant additional combat forces capable of repelling an armored assault or effectively turn tail and run. To the everlasting shame of every member of the BCT, POTUS made the latter decision. In particular, a European political cartoonist from Germany crafted a lasting, bitter image: soldiers fleeing from an Arianan mouse, with the American flag flopping to the ground.

The mission was a failure, and it was a total humiliation for our brigade, the Army, and the United States.

Lessons from the Third Dream

This painful dream faded, leaving me with a sense of unease and these lessons:

12. The efforts planned and coordinated by IO need to be monitored and assessed; otherwise, you're shooting in the dark.

We failed in the mission because even though we were active in and through the information environment, we were also ineffective. We could measure *performance* but not *effectiveness*. Absent useful feedback to gauge effectiveness and make course corrections, by the time it became clear that we weren't having much effect, it was too late, and I wasn't even sure why. Usable assessment data could have come from intelligence, observation, and other sources specific to our various tactical efforts, but we had no plan to collect and analyze the data.

13. IO is not well understood in the force.

I was taken aback that the BCT executive officer didn't think that civil affairs was an IRC. On reflection, many of my interactions with other soldiers, from commanders to squad leaders, demonstrated a lack of understanding of IO. It isn't enough just to do IO. Sometimes you also need to take the time to explain IO and related capabilities, as well as their limitations and timelines.

14. Success in IO requires prioritizing intelligence support for IO.

When I came looking for intelligence support with the operation in full swing, the information the BCT had been collecting was of little use for IRC assessment or for IO more generally. While traditional military intelligence collection focuses on enemy groups, capabilities, and their actions, I needed to explain to the S-2 exactly what intelligence I needed to support IO. I also needed to convince the commander that things I wanted to know needed to be priorities in the intelligence collection process.

15. IO objectives must be clear and precise.

As the CAT-B commander pointed out, "You can't measure how well you're doing if you're not clear about what you're trying to do." Overall operational objectives were vague, so it was easy for me to support them with good-sounding but slightly ambiguous IO objectives. The easy road was the wrong road. These underspecified IO objectives made it hard for us to assess

against them. Imprecise objectives probably also made it hard to connect objectives together, to ensure the coordinated pursuit of those objectives (because everyone was probably interpreting them a little differently), and this may have even undermined execution. I should have articulated clear and precise candidate IO objectives, made sure that the final scheme of IO had clear and precise objectives, and made sure that the IRCs had clear and precise objectives that connected to the overall IO objectives, which, in turn, supported commander's intent.



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Populations Aren't Terrain to Be Navigated

I tossed and turned in my sleep as yet another dream began, with all except my 15 lessons appearing as if wholly new to me. Our BCT was tasked with providing humanitarian assistance to flood-ravaged Atropia and supporting the Atropian armed forces to deter neighboring Ariana.

My efforts in anticipation of the operations proceeded much as they had in the third dream; I will not bore you with repetition. I did try to make more of a contribution to the planning for the later phases of the operation, pushing for more clarity and specificity on the effects we would seek in and through the information environment. The commander's intent and concept of operations that initially emerged from the operational planning team made clear the importance of both the physical and the informational in achieving the commander's end state. However, while it was sufficient to avoid dire mistakes and get us oriented in the right direction, it lacked important specifics.

I knew that it was important to have IRC tasks that nest clearly with IO objectives and IO objectives that, in turn, nest clearly with broader operational objectives. Unfortunately, the broader operational objectives hadn't been stated clearly enough to imply sufficiently clear IO objectives. I thought about asking for additional guidance, but I found it hard to articulate the questions I wanted to ask, and I suspected that the planning lead or the S-3 would be frustrated by these hard-to-ask, hard-to-answer questions. Instead of looking for a top-down solution to my problem, I decided to try to solve the problem from the bottom up.

I convened the IO working group, and we started asking ourselves about potential IO objectives. For example, beyond the basic humanitarian concern with helping displaced civilians, what effects were our relief efforts supposed to have? How exactly was our security cooperation effort with Atropian forces going to deter Ariana? What, if anything, did we want the broader international community to think or do based on our efforts here? With respect to the information environment, what end state did we want to achieve? We tried to be as clear as possible about how we thought our planned operations were going to contribute to mission objectives and how IO could help ensure that our actions would lead to those results.

Now we could work out intermediate objectives and I could go to the operational planning team with more than a blank look on my face. As I suspected, it was much more productive to ask, in effect, "Is this what you want to have happen?" and have my best-guess reinterpretation already spelled out, than it would have been to just ask, "So, what do you really want?" We'd hit the intent of the commander pretty well. My presentation was well received; we tweaked it a little in the planning team meeting and then the commander approved it with minor adjustments.

With specific IO objectives in place (and clear connections to the overall concept of operations for the phase), it was easy to develop nested IRC tasks in the IO working group, which, in turn, would let us think through assessments. With clear IO objectives and IRC tasks, we

talked through how progress toward those goals could be observed or monitored. These clearly broke into two types: those that could be monitored easily alongside our activities and those that required other kinds of data collection. We arranged for the executing capabilities to monitor and report on the things that they could observe and requested support from the battalions in monitoring the things they could observe. I took the rest of the list to the S-2 shop to see what we could do. I went over the list with an intel analyst I knew. I had kind of an “Aha!” moment with her as we reviewed the intel prep of the battlefield brief.

I realized that the S-2 shop was entirely focused on the enemy and its capabilities. It was the same stuff I'd seen since Basic Officer Leader Course: enemy organization, capabilities, likely COAs, priorities in intel requirements, etc. There was no attention to the information environment, and—even worse—no attention to our unified action partners and the local populace. In no way was intel support integrated into IO efforts. I explained my needs for intel support with respect to the three dimensions of the information environment (physical, informational, cognitive) and got buy-in. The S-2 agreed to push for two additional priority intelligence requirements: one focused on key community leaders and the other on enemy interactions with the populace. Based on my training in the IOFC, I encouraged her to reach out to IO organizations for information environment-specific information and intelligence: the Joint IO Warfare Center, the Army's 1st Information Operations Command (Land), or the regionally aligned Theater Information Operations Group. She also agreed to add informational lines of communication to those requirements. Working with the S-2 reminded me again that I couldn't assume IO is understood throughout the force.

I also talked to the public affairs officer and MISO commander. We worked toward refining branches and sequels for consequence management in all phases of the operation. We refined counter-propaganda plans to incorporate additional nuance. Most importantly, I think, we built a flow chart, or battle drill, with embedded criteria to help us make decisions about whether certain instances of propaganda needed to be countered at all, and we added detail to the plans to make sure that our counter-propaganda matched the scale and scope of the original propaganda: We didn't want to inadvertently give *The Truth* free advertising.

I also really got into it with the CAT-B commander. There were lots of things they were planning to do that were good for the people of Atropia, but I kept pushing him to show me how his planned activities supported our clarified IO objectives and the overall operational objectives. I mean, everyone understands that helping displaced civilians is a good thing. But beyond that, can you articulate how a given civil-military operation effort contributes to the commander's end state? Your proposed aid distribution stations: What are the intended effects and how will you measure effectiveness? And the metric better not be “aid packages handed out,” because I'm pretty sure the intended effect isn't to give people goods for transport and resale, or—even worse—redistribution to insurgents. To the degree he could show me how civil-military operations directly contributed to the end state, I could go to bat to argue for the intermediate objectives connecting CAT action to the mission. That was the bottom line.

The upshot was that, as a staff, we had integrated IO into the planning from the start and thought through both the activity and support to achieve IO objectives. We also considered how we would measure the effectiveness of those efforts.

The initial operation proceeded smoothly, and we began to both render humanitarian aid and conduct security cooperation exercises with Atropian forces. Evaluation and monitoring efforts were in place so we'd be able to assess the progress of our efforts and hopefully fix any that were deficient.

However, three weeks into the operation, new assessment data revealed mixed results from both the humanitarian assistance and security cooperation efforts. On the aid side, food distribution sites were functioning, but turnout was much lower than expected, given the conditions. Construction efforts in disaster areas were effective in containing the flooding, but evacuations continued and displaced civilian flows swelled. Local attitudes toward soldiers and the efforts we were making were positive, but desired behaviors, including the use of aid sites and returning to cleared former flooding areas, lagged. On the security cooperation side, our Atropian partners really didn't impress us, and there was a lot of frustration on our end. Their attitude toward us was positive—they seemed to like us. But motivation and competence didn't seem to be rubbing off on them. The bottom line was that they still didn't provide much in the way of a deterrent value against Ariana.

This was important feedback on our effectiveness, but I wished we'd had this sooner so we could have made an early course correction. I had to report up the chain that effectiveness was lagging, but I also provided corrective COAs. We worked to make adjustments. I requested additional public affairs and MISO support to encourage use of the distribution sites and push information out more broadly: site locations, directions to get there, hours of operation, etc. In addition to our own broadcast and dissemination capabilities, we contracted with local media, sources the population normally relied on for news and information.

I also suggested that civil affairs expand service hours at the sites and relocate some of the aid distribution sites to areas cleared of hazards to encourage residents to return. I felt confident about these changes. I wanted to make similar changes in support of the security cooperation effort, but I didn't know where to start. Assessment had revealed that there was a problem, but I wasn't altogether sure what the problem was. I suspected that it had something to do with morale, so I figured that more team building and socializing with soldiers couldn't hurt; I requested delivery of recreation equipment to the local Atropian forces' base, hoping that morale and cooperation might improve if the two nations' forces played volleyball or soccer together.

The operation continued, and we continued to monitor assessment data as they came in, watching for an uptick. I know changing attitudes and behaviors can take time, so I wasn't too worried. An initial uptick in one of my key metrics proved to be noise in the data; the trend lines remained flat—and inadequate. After another three weeks, I began to fear that the problems I had "fixed" with my course corrections were not really the problems that needed to be fixed. In desperation, I collected ideas and impressions from other staff elements and units on the ground. Based on informal feedback gained from key leader engagements and the impressions of the troops who were conducting the security cooperation exercises, I started to get a better picture.

Aid distribution sites were plagued by several problems. First, local extremists had started rumors that the food being handed out was tainted. Their propaganda claimed that the products were not prepared in accordance with local religious dictates and might even be poisoned. The fact that the food was processed, heavy in preservatives, and not typical of the local diet enhanced their claims. Second, many local tribal leaders felt excluded from the aid distribution process and thus believed that it undermined their authority. Even though their people needed the support, it was obvious they would rather have the effort fail than see their own status diminished. And, of course, one of the tribal leaders happened to control the scarce local buses and had been rerouting them away from the aid distribution sites, making it hard for people to get to and from the sites.

I now understood that there were more local difficulties and continued to ask around about other efforts. It turned out that continued self-evacuations from flood-prone areas that we had made safe were just a matter of historical perspective. Based on generations of experience, local residents didn't believe it was possible to build effective levees so quickly, so they dismissed as implausible our broadcasts claiming to have made their home areas safe again. On the partnering side, after getting feedback from the commander's engagements with key officers in the Atropian forces, I started to understand the potential issues there, too. The Atropian military didn't want to seem ungrateful or give offense, but it appeared that the security cooperation efforts were not well matched to the Atropians' needs. The training being offered and the exercises conducted were too basic. Atropian arms proficiency and tactical ability were more than adequate. What the Atropian forces really needed were better radios, better logistics support, and staff exercises to help them better integrate intel and ops and decrease their planning-to-execution timeline.

So, really, it was less about our partners not being engaged and more about us misunderstanding what they needed. If we'd leveraged our direct relationship connections sooner, we'd have figured that out much quicker. It occurred to me that maybe I should have planned for engagements with key leaders, both military and civilian, as a data collection task. Anyway, now that we knew what went wrong, I could work across the staff to help coordinate better informational support.

Once we adjusted based on what was really going on, things turned around, and formal metrics began to show an uptick. But it was also now two months into the operation, and with a terrible feeling of helplessness, I came to realize that it was too little, too late. The humanitarian crisis we had been sent to address was only marginally better—much of our effort failed to produce desired effects because we didn't really understand our audience.

We lost on two fronts. In our immediate AO, we had opened the door to an effective insurgency. We had alienated important tribal leaders, and while we struggled to repair those relationships, anger and mistrust toward U.S. forces gave extremists the operating space they needed. We were forced to transition to security operations when we should have been focusing on relief and partnering. Sniper and improvised explosive device attacks became part of the operational environment, and soon international media began reporting *not* on U.S. humanitarian aid but on "the U.S. Army-led counterinsurgency in Atropia."

All of this came to a head after an unfortunate incident at a displaced-civilian camp close to the Ariana border. There was a huge riot at the camp, most likely orchestrated by insurgents. They attacked both the international relief workers and the Army security platoon, and the result was incredibly ugly. On the one hand, the platoon leader performed magnificently. He understood that a bunch of dead displaced civilians was not what anyone wanted and would have been a disaster for the mission. He and his squad deftly used minimal and nonlethal force to disengage from the attackers and managed to rescue three aid workers. But on the other hand, the rioters still had three Iberian hostages. When they executed one of them, the Atropian Quick Reaction Force (which we had trained) rolled in and killed eight displaced civilians, all of them ethnic Arianans. In this context of criticism and unpopularity, it was all that Ariana needed to act. Within eight hours, Arianan armored forces crossed the border into Atropia.

The valiant but doomed Atropian defense was the bitterest pill we had to swallow. We had been wrong about them—the Atropians were not the goofs we had thought they were. They put up a good fight, at least at the tactical level. They understood the old hunter/killer team concept for anti-armor, and they employed it perfectly in at least two locations, successfully

engaging and destroying enemy tanks. But in the operational sense, their inability to gather, process, and communicate intel, and their real lack of staff capacity above the company level, meant they couldn't fight as a force. Arianan armored forces were generally able to bypass and cut off the Atropians, and at that point they fell apart. If we had better understood their needs, we could have done so much more. We failed them.

Worse, the Arianans captured two adviser teams from one of our battalions that were colocated with host-nation forces. The Arianans were pretty smart—they didn't visibly mistreat the soldiers but still used them as effective propaganda. The troops were paraded in front of the media and forced to wear local garb with their heads shaved. The Arianans managed to get non-U.S. media outlets like Al-Jazeera and BBC to use the term "detainees," so instead of holding prisoners of war, the Arianans hoped to "quickly negotiate the return of American detainees" as part of creating an "ethnic justice and protection zone" in the district.

They had POTUS over a barrel. We negotiated our redeployment and swift departure, along with the return of the captured soldiers. It was particularly galling to have Krasnovian forces invited in by the Arianans to act as neutral observers and "guarantee U.S. conduct," acting as go-betweens. Somehow, after all our good initial work, we still wound up completely failing to accomplish the mission.

Lessons from the Fourth Dream

As the dream began to fade, I had a sour taste in my mouth from a promising start that had deteriorated so badly. I was left contemplating five new lessons, which I added to my collection:

16. Good deeds do not speak for themselves.

Although I recognized that civil affairs was an information-related capability that could generate effects through the information environment to support the mission, I failed to synchronize support from other IRCs to reinforce the message of those deeds. I should not have assumed that simply restoring flooded areas would be good enough. I should also have planned to advertise that achievement and to actively encourage the displaced civilians from cleared areas to return to their homes. My plans should have included better efforts to advertise relief distribution sites.

17. Do not assume that changing attitudes will change behaviors.

Both the local population and the Atropian forces with whom we were engaged had very positive attitudes toward us, but they weren't doing what we wanted. We focus on the cognitive and the informational because we want people to act in a certain way, to *do* certain things. We wanted displaced persons to collect needed humanitarian aid and return to their homes when they could. We wanted Atropian soldiers to exercise with us to demonstrate and improve their capabilities. We wanted Arianan forces to stay on their own side of the border. Positive attitudes might have helped with that, but we needed to be more explicit about desired behaviors. I should have made sure that both the IO objectives and the end-point assessment criteria were stated in behavioral—not attitudinal—terms.

18. Consider the information environment from the population's perspective.

On the subject of relief distribution sites, my failure to understand the local perspective kept our scheme of IO from being effective at all. I just assumed that everyone would think that our provision of relief supplies would be a good thing, and I didn't think about other points of view. I should have considered the perspectives of local authorities or power brokers, or those of local extremists. If we had those perspectives in mind, we might have better coordinated with local authorities and earned their support rather than their resistance, and we might have been better prepared to address extremist disinformation about our relief efforts. If I had better understood local perspectives, we could have avoided making implausible-seeming claims about flood control (using more visual imagery, promulgating demonstrations and explanations from engineers, tours of control areas for local leaders), and we could have prevented extremists from making plausible claims about improper or tainted relief supplies.

In this operation, we could and should have better understood the local population in support of relief efforts. In other operations, local perspectives (and behaviors) may be even more important. Local populations can impact operations over the long term (voting behavior, support for a peace accord settlement, according legitimacy), but also in the short term (joining protests or mobs, supporting adversaries with resources and intelligence, joining irregular forces, interfering with operations). So, consider issues and actions from the perspective of the domestic population and understand how easily use of force, even when justified, can undermine popular support.

19. Things do not always happen for the reasons you think; causation can be complicated when behaviors, perceptions, cognition, and culture are involved.

We had metrics in place and were able to see that both our security cooperation and humanitarian efforts were struggling, but we didn't know why. Although I made some reasonable assumptions about why we were failing, I was wrong. I misdiagnosed the reasons we weren't achieving our effects in both disaster relief and security cooperation, made the wrong course corrections, and kept us on a path toward failure for too long. I should have considered a wider range of possibilities and tried to gather more information.

I think this is a fairly common problem in IO. While we all share a reasonable understanding of how things work in the physical world, the way things work in the cognitive realm, or when culture is involved, is less well understood and thus vulnerable to mistaken assumptions. So, be explicit about your assumptions, especially the underlying logic of any effort (the ways the capabilities employed are supposed to produce the desired ends). If something unexpected occurs, consider (and try to test) a range of possible explanations.

20. Fail fast. Quickly try, quickly monitor results, and quickly adjust assumptions and efforts accordingly.

Although I ultimately figured out what was plaguing our various efforts, it was too little, too late. To reach the right conclusion in time, I should have turned things over more quickly. There was nothing wrong with me having some initial ideas about what was wrong with our struggling humanitarian and security cooperation efforts, but I should have treated those ideas as just one set of possible reasons. Without any way to know which of a number of compet-

ing explanations was actually correct, I should have chosen the one I thought most likely and pressed ahead with it while monitoring the situation and looking for other explanations. If I had been able to discard my mistaken assumptions more quickly and get to some of the real reasons for failure sooner, we might have been able to salvage the operation. Because of the complexity of psychological processes and the cultural terrain, there is often considerable uncertainty about how different audiences will respond to different stimuli. When faced with such a situation, “fail fast.”



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The Enemy Has a Say in This, Too

I dreamed again, retaining only the lessons from the previous dreams. As before, I worked hard to make sure that aspects of the operation that relied on effects in or through the information environment received due consideration in planning for all phases—that the efforts of the IRCs were integrated and supported, that IO objectives and IRC tasks nested with broader mission objectives, and that assessment plans were in place. However, this time our assessment efforts ended up being more robust. Not only did we identify ways to monitor the results of our efforts, but we also sought to collect information on things that might go wrong with our efforts to help us understand why we struggled in any given effort. This included planning for data collection from key leaders and from the informal observations and atmospheric data provided by maneuver elements engaging with partners and local citizens.

Our preparations paid off. The beginnings of our humanitarian and security cooperation missions went smoothly. Although the rollout was smooth, early indicators suggested that both the aid effort and our partnering with Atropian forces were missing the mark. I think because we had been keyed up to be attentive to the local population and our partners—we understood that they weren't passive objects in this—we got a fairly quick read on what was happening. During the staff meeting, I listened as we went around the horn. The S-2 reported, among other things, that there had been a sudden change in the local bus patterns. The S-3 also noted that while the training teams we had sent out were enthusiastically received, two different Atropian staff officers had asked when the “real training” would start—which was a (confusing) red flag. The S-9 shared that food distribution was way lower than it should have been, given the size of the displaced population, and also noted that while the engineers had worked marvels in the flood area, literally none of the displaced residents had moved back.

As a staff, though, we were ready for that kind of mixed bag. We had built it into our planning process that we had to expect some failures in our assumptions, that we would have to be agile in picking up and dropping different perspectives, and that we would need to cast a wide net to synthesize different data sources. Most of all, we were ready to respond on the fly: As the commander said, “Flexible is too stiff. You gotta be fluid.”

We quickly realized that while we had effectively engaged Atropian government personnel, we had overlooked local tribal leaders. The commander apologized personally to several key leaders for failing to recognize the importance of their positions and, after deconflicting with the district and central governments, arranged to involve these authorities in the aid distribution process. We had to be careful to make sure aid was fairly distributed, but everyone seemed to be happy with credit for relief going to a combination of the U.S. government, a concerned host-nation government, and local leaders. These contacts also helped us realize that locals didn't believe we could have built levees so quickly and effectively. To reassure the displaced residents that they could return home safely, public affairs distributed combat camera footage of combat engineers building levees to local news networks, coupled with announce-

ments of which areas had been flood-proofed. As a result, residents began returning to their homes. Inviting local media (and local leaders) to a presentation on the food aid being provided helped diminish the effectiveness of extremists' efforts to paint it as unhealthy or inappropriate.

We also made changes on the partnering side. An informal needs assessment conducted jointly with the command staff of district Atropian forces allowed us to refocus our security cooperation efforts. It turned out that the Atropians were reasonably competent at the tactical level—what they needed was help in command and control, and staff coordination. That was why they seemed so unmotivated. We'd made some incorrect assumptions and hadn't really been listening when they'd tried to tell us otherwise. We revised our entire advise/assist plan to focus on improving communication and logistics capacity, as well as staff planning/coordination. The best thing we did was develop a series of progressively more complex exercises for their staff. It was a challenge in terms of operational tempo, but the dividends were quick and unambiguous.

Effective security cooperation was the foundation for several of our IO lines of effort. Now, we were able to showcase confident Atropian forces exercising alongside U.S. soldiers, conducting more complex exercises than they ever had before. Both public affairs and MISO integrated reinforcing and complementary themes and images into their efforts (with help from the IO working group to ensure sure that they didn't end up contradicting each other or messages from higher). This contributed to IO objectives supporting Atropian force confidence, the confidence of Atropian citizens in their military, and, most importantly, one of our primary mission (and IO) objectives: the deterrence of Ariana.

Sensing their opportunities disappearing, provocateurs from Ariana encouraged *The Truth* to launch a string of terrorist attacks, citing the need to repel the foreign occupiers and convince the population that they should reject the government, which had invited us into Atropia. This caused the BCT to adapt. Fortunately, our commander had directed that we include such contingencies in the unit's branch plans. In response to more than a dozen terrorist attacks in the district, the government of Atropia formally requested U.S. help with its internal security challenge, conducting operations alongside Atropian forces. While we waited for the Ambassador to consult with Washington and reach a decision, the staff went into rapid-response planning, as we did not have detailed plans for this unexpected turn of events.

During this time-pressured planning process, the operational planning team lead pushed me toward efforts to minimize the impact of combined operations on the views of the local populace so that we wouldn't lose the goodwill we had gained. As a result, I was excluded from the core group working on the scheme of fires and maneuver and from the heavy additional staff work required to coordinate and partner with the Atropian forces. The idea was that while the planning team focused on operations against the enemy, I would be kept in the loop to keep IO on the same page. I wasn't sure about that decision—I kind of felt like we were limiting IO to supporting only civil-military operations and separating IO from the enemy-focused operations. But I had to admit that maintaining the goodwill of the local population during these security operations was important, and the scheme of IO we had developed in the working group covered down on that.

The Ambassador notified the commander that we were responding favorably to the government of Atropia's request and listed the constraints and a new set of objectives, all of which aligned pretty well with what the operational planning team had expected. Combined multinational counterterrorism operations with the Atropian forces began soon after. Our collaboration with the Atropians seemed to go well at first, built on the foundation of trust and mutual

respect we'd developed during our early security cooperation. But that early success faded fast. *The Truth* always seemed to be one step ahead of us. They had much better intelligence than they had any right to have; we began to suspect that Atropian forces had been compromised or that Atropian OPSEC was just really poor. By contrast, *The Truth's* OPSEC was pretty good: They had a cell structure that protected their organization, and they had not been penetrated by government intelligence assets. Our technical intelligence capabilities were able to get some good take, but there were concerns about sharing intel with the Atropians. When our intel folks found ways to eventually sanitize and share, a combination of the age of the information and the apparent compromise of the Atropian forces hamstrung efforts to exploit it.

The Truth could launch unexpected attacks, but when a combined force would move on a suspected terrorist hideout, we never took them by surprise. Targeted locations were inevitably abandoned (often just before the operation), booby-trapped, used to ambush friendly forces, or not terrorist hideouts at all but, rather, some innocent venue. The terrorists clearly understood that we were collecting intelligence on them, and they were engaging in deceptions that sometimes succeeded in misleading the Atropians. They also demonstrated some rudimentary jamming capability when they ambushed the combined force, effectively cutting off Atropian radio communications once an ambush had begun. BCT communication systems were immune to their efforts, so we were never directly affected, but the constant surprises unleashed by *The Truth* kept the Atropians back on their heels.

Extremist propaganda was even more effective, because the group had advantages that weren't available to us. They could cycle much faster than we could. We needed time to coordinate and deconflict our messaging, as well as seek approvals for new products, while they seemed to be able to simply decide and act. And more importantly, they could lie. In their single most effective operation, they took a tactical victory on our part and proceeded to beat us about the head and neck with it. Insurgents had ambushed an Atropian patrol outside a marketplace—pretty good tactical planning on their part, basically a large L-shaped ambush down the main street leading in and out of the marketplace. But the patrol consisted of Atropian troops we had worked with pretty extensively, and they came through like champs. Despite initially taking casualties, they followed their procedures perfectly and pushed through the kill zone to take the fight to the enemy. It turned out that although one Atropian was killed and three were injured, their extremely accurate direct fire and use of hand grenades killed five insurgents. Then there was the bad part: The patrol did not recover the bodies of the dead insurgents, which *The Truth* proceeded to arrange the next day as if they had been at morning prayer, gunned down by Atropians in cold blood. And they also got mobile-phone footage of the ambush. We weren't sure whether they filmed it or got it from a sympathetic bystander, but they put that video online after the images of the bodies, creating the impression that Atropians had committed an atrocity and the insurgents had bravely fought back against “the invader puppets and dogs.”

That sort of thing happened more than once. MISO and public affairs worked hard to counter this propaganda and also tried to spin less successful operations to look better in an effort to keep up morale and support for Atropian forces. This backfired, too. To our dismay, it turned out that there had actually been violations of the law of armed conflict by Atropian forces in some of their own operations. When the truth of two documented Atropian atrocities emerged and was confirmed by credible media, news outlets continued to dig and exposed those “spin” attempts. BCT credibility was shattered. The U.S. Department of State responded by working with the combatant command to change the collaboration rules with the Atropi-

ans to distance the United States from complicity in the atrocities. It was too little, too late: International indignation rose, and the Arianans used that outrage as cover to cross the border to protect their co-ethnics from further atrocities. Under the circumstances, the BCT couldn't directly confront the Arianan attack, and the Atropians were left to defend their border on their own.

The security cooperation portion of our mission was suspended, leaving the Atropians without our help. They put up a pretty stiff fight at the border, and the improvements in their staffing and planning processes really paid dividends. But without us to help push them over the top, the conflict progressed to an ugly stalemate. Insurgents and Arianan forces engaged in atrocities against local noncombatants, and accusations of continued Atropian atrocities against locals of Arianan ethnicity continued (whether accurate or manufactured, we couldn't tell). Although the threat from flooding had subsided, a new humanitarian crisis emerged as the same displaced persons previously hit by the flooding now fled again due to the fighting. We were instructed to establish safe havens for as many of the refugees as possible, which we ably did. Sidelined, we watched in frustration as the bloody conflict wore on, deepening the humanitarian crisis. We were embarrassed by the atrocities (real or imagined) of our former partners, but we were more embarrassed to be standing by within arm's reach as they continued to fight the Arianans' incursion. We were finally relieved by UN forces who would continue to oversee the displaced civilian camps. Despite our good intentions, hard work, and promising initial progress, we had actually made things worse, contributing to conflict and suffering rather than alleviating them.

Lessons from the Fifth Dream

As the stinging shame of this dream of failure faded from my mind, I reflected on the five new lessons I had learned:

21. Every operation is an information operation.

The way in which our combined operations with the Atropians ended up souring the information environment clearly demonstrated to me that every patrol, every battle, every raid is a chance to persuade the population to support the government (or some desired end state). As part of that, every action or utterance sends a message, whether intended or not. There are no purely kinetic or enemy-focused operations. To imagine that there are is to prepare to win every battle but lose the war.

22. IO can deliver effects on enemy forces and commanders, as well as on civilian populations.

Integrated IRCs are applicable across the full range of military operations. Depending on the mission and context, IO can deliver effects on civilian populations and on enemy forces and commanders. When operations are focused primarily on the adversary, IO has a lot to offer in terms of effects on enemy cognition, decisionmaking processes, and systems.

It was a mistake to allow myself (and IO) to be marginalized once the operation became kinetic. I should have focused on new anti-Arianan efforts and leveraged IO to undermine

insurgent command-and-control nodes and to help minimize the possible negative effects of operations by considering those operations themselves partially as IRCs (not just trying to minimize the impact of ill-conceived actions with public affairs and MISO).

23. Adversaries can do things that you cannot. Be prepared for them.

I should not have been surprised by the insurgents' high-quality OPSEC, their use of jamming, or their effective intelligence penetration of Atropian forces. After all, we do those things too. I should have expected the enemy to use IRCs beyond just propaganda. If I had been doing my job, efforts to degrade enemy decisionmaking—coupled with helping our Atropian partners increase their OPSEC (both IO functions)—might have diminished the value of adversary intelligence. I also should not have been surprised when the insurgents staged a false atrocity. The bad guys are not restricted by the same legal and ethical constraints that we are, and their disinformation and skullduggery know no bounds. Though I find it repugnant, there is no point in wasting time complaining about it. In the future, I will be ready for it.

24. Information-related capabilities that are not well integrated with operations are vulnerable to being overwhelmed.

Public affairs and MISO efforts got crushed by the reality of operations. We got caught saying one thing and doing another. I need to remember that some of the things that aren't traditionally considered IRCs (like maneuver, force protection, and fires) can have the biggest effects in and through the information environment. These capabilities are "loud" in the information environment and can unintentionally trump other efforts—for example, fires destroying information-related targets, or maneuver or force protection contradicting or invalidating messaging efforts. IO must be fully integrated with the operations process, from design, through planning, then execution.

25. It can take years to build credibility but only minutes to tear it down.

While I should have raised it as an issue and kept it from happening, I watched as MISO and, to some extent, even public affairs tried to keep a positive spin on less-than-successful Atropian and combined operations. While it was well intentioned, it seriously and permanently undermined our credibility. In today's information environment, the truth is always going to come out eventually, so we really need to avoid lies and spin. It occurs to me that communication backed by kinetic action can create credibility; yet another reason to keep IO fully integrated with operations—so you can keep your threats and promises.

26. Sometimes, the most important effect in or through the information environment is the one you avoid.

The conditions we set in the information environment did nothing to prevent Atropian forces from committing atrocities or to prevent insurgents from magnifying those atrocities with their propaganda. Nor did any of our IO efforts reduce the consequences of that propaganda or prevent the Arianans from finding an excuse to invade. If I had better anticipated this sequence of events, I might have been able to plan something to prevent or mitigate its consequences. While I'd spent a lot of time thinking about what we wanted to happen, I hadn't spent enough

time thinking about what we *didn't* want to happen. I should have worked backward in planning, not only from the physical and informational aspects of the commander's desired end state but from our adversaries' as well.

Well-Integrated Capabilities Have Significant Effects In and Through the Information Environment

I once again found myself facing a fresh mission for the BCT. Though new to me in the dream, events unfolded following a pattern made familiar in this account. As previously, I worked hard to make sure that

- aspects of the mission that relied on effects in or through the information environment received due consideration in planning for all phases
- the efforts and effects of information-related capabilities were integrated and supported
- IO objectives and IRC tasks nested with broader mission objectives
- assessment efforts were in place.

Although initial humanitarian aid and security cooperation efforts struggled, rapid assessment feedback from a range of sources and an expectation to adapt allowed us to get things on the right track, with the humanitarian crisis significantly diminished and substantial improvements to the staff and logistics capabilities of Atropian forces in the district.

Sensing their opportunities disappearing, provocateurs from Ariana encouraged *The Truth* to launch a string of terrorist attacks, citing in their propaganda the need to repel the foreign occupiers and reject the government that had invited them. In response to these attacks, the government of Atropia formally requested U.S. support to internal security, conducting operations alongside Atropian forces. While waiting for formal approval of the request and permission to operate by, with, and through the Atropian forces, we initiated mission analysis.

When the operation turned kinetic, the operational planning team lead tried to focus IO efforts on maintaining the goodwill of the local populace. I reminded the S-3 that IO had its roots in command-and-control warfare. While we could and would certainly continue to inform and influence the locals in support of evolving mission objectives, we could also help degrade, disrupt, corrupt, or usurp adversary decisionmaking while helping to protect our own (right out of the joint definition of IO).¹ Maybe we could even help protect our partner forces' decisionmaking. He agreed to let me plan, at least, and eventually bought into the scheme of IO we developed. "You can do all this?" he demanded to know. I assured him that I'd spoken to all the IRC leads and that we could. I pointed out that some of it was contingent on what intel could provide us as a place to start and some of it was contingent on the receipt of certain authorities, but all of that was clearly stated in the details of our scheme of IO.

We helped our partner forces with OPSEC, sharing basic principles, helping them execute the OPSEC methodology, and decreasing the number of unintended indicators they were

¹ As a refresher for anyone needing it, Joint Publication 3-13, *Information Operations*, defines IO as "the integrated employment, during military operations, of IRCs in concert with other lines of operation to influence, disrupt, corrupt, or usurp the decision making of adversaries and potential adversaries while protecting our own."

generating. We discussed OPSEC concerns with local Atropian commanders, and they shared our concerns; with their cooperation and as part of joint development and rehearsal of rapid-response (battle) drills, we were able to minimize the lead time the Atropians needed to execute operations against the terrorists while also minimizing the opportunity for the terrorists to plan based on any leaks.

As part of our red-teaming, we identified the potential for human rights and law of war violations by Atropians as something that could undermine our collective efforts. We modified a MISO series used previously with a different partner nation to emphasize the importance of professionalism and the responsibility of a nation's military to protect all its citizens. I made sure that our soldiers who were working with Atropian forces—either for training or as part of the combined force—were aware of and supported these efforts. In engagements with Atropian troops, we emphasized all aspects of professionalism in keeping with the MISO themes. In engagements with Atropian senior leaders and staffs, our officers focused on the danger of provoking the Arianans through repressive tactics or disproportionate force. By sharing our real concerns with the Atropian forces' leadership, we hoped to encourage them to emphasize the importance of discipline in this area to their own troops.

Concurrent with these efforts to better protect friendly decisionmaking and reduce the prospects for human rights-related provocations, we really went after the adversary. Working closely with intel, we identified how the insurgents were communicating with each other. We then used electronic warfare and other technical capabilities to selectively shut down channels available to them, herding them toward communications that could be compromised by available intel means. Once we were inside their communications, we were able to unleash havoc on them. We had to be careful and not tip them off that their communications were compromised—we didn't want them to go silent or swap modes.

In a carefully choreographed sequence, we coordinated numerous capabilities in quick succession. We delivered messages to specific insurgents who were identified by intel as vulnerable to MISO or military deception—threatening them, trying to bribe them, urging their defection, or making them suspicious of their own colleagues. High-value targets we couldn't influence were targeted for capture or kill based on the information gleaned from enemy communications. We were so far inside their decision cycle that we could counter their attacks and conduct our own successful ambush patrols. Careful timing and MISO messaging made them think they had been infiltrated or that one or more of the high-value targets we'd captured was talking. Counter-propaganda became easier, too. Knowing the extremists' operational objectives and their plans for the use of propaganda made it possible to inoculate the information environment against their lies and to make sure combat camera assets were in the right place to document their (now often failing) operations for use in our own (and Atropian) press releases. By carefully synchronizing IRCs and integrating them with physical operations, we were highly effective against the terrorists while protecting and continuing to exploit our advantage.

Our efforts to degrade adversary command and control also helped with our efforts to maintain popular goodwill toward the BCT and the government and forces of Atropia. The level of hurt we put on the insurgents kept them in total disarray; they had no successes to publicize and no comfortable time to plan and generate their propaganda. I guess this was one of those times where the best defense really was a good offense. Conversely, we had numerous successes of our own to advertise to increase support for our collective end states: tactical successes, captured terrorists, defections, and captured documents showing the Arianan role in encouraging and provoking these attacks. Of course, our continued humanitarian efforts

helped, too. We genuinely helped people in need, and that earned goodwill from the populace. That goodwill paid off tangibly when we transitioned to MISO efforts to encourage specific supportive behaviors, like reporting suspicious activity to a tips line. Our IO efforts against the terrorists and to gain support from the local population were mutually reinforcing.

With the insurgents' networks shattered and discredited, with the more robust capabilities of the Atropian forces on clear display, and with international indignation against the Arianans running high, the security situation quickly stabilized. After a few months, the BCT was able to withdraw, leaving behind a more capable partner, an improved security situation, a resolved humanitarian crisis, and an Atropia grateful from top to bottom.

Prior to our departure from Atropia, the BCT had a barbeque to celebrate individual and collective accomplishments. I was biting into a juicy rib when I heard the commander calling me forward. I was getting slaps on the back as I heeded his call . . .

. . . only to be rudely awakened from my dream by the thud of the aircraft and the squeal of the landing gear's brakes on the runway as we touched down at our destination.



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Epilogue

Awaking in Louisiana, I found myself somewhat disoriented. The BCT was headed for JRTC, not a real-world deployment. Although I had never undertaken the responsibilities of an IO officer here in the waking world, I now felt more confident, and prudently cautious, about my ability to do so. I knew that there would be challenges and difficulties but that I would fare reasonably well if I remembered my training and the 26 lessons I had learned in the dreamland of Atropia:

1. Effective information operations cannot be an afterthought. If IO is part of planning, it is more likely to be part of the plan.
2. If effects in and through the information environment are important to the commander, they should feature prominently in commander's intent.
3. Maneuver and fires generate effects in the information environment, too.
4. Plan for friendly-force mistakes and adversary propaganda.
5. All communications are potentially global. What you do and say here can have effects elsewhere, and vice versa.
6. IO is like fire-support coordination; it is an integrating function, not itself an information-producing/affecting capability.
7. One information-related capability by itself produces minimal effects and risks being overwhelmed by others or other lines of operation.
8. Information-related capabilities that are not part of the scheme of IO may still be active; ensure that all information-related capability operators are aware of IO plans and that all plans are deconflicted, at a minimum.
9. Information-related capabilities can have lengthy timelines, for both execution and results.
10. Events do not always unfold according to plan, so prepare IO branches and sequels.
11. Warfare—including information warfare—involves trade-offs.
12. The efforts planned and coordinated by IO need to be monitored and assessed; otherwise, you're shooting in the dark.
13. IO is not well understood in the force.
14. Success in IO requires prioritizing intelligence support for IO.
15. IO objectives must be clear and precise.
16. Good deeds do not speak for themselves.
17. Do not assume that changing attitudes will change behaviors.
18. Consider the information environment from the population's perspective.
19. Things do not always happen for the reasons you think; causation can be complicated when behaviors, perceptions, cognition, and culture are involved.

20. Fail fast. Quickly try, quickly monitor results, and quickly adjust assumptions and efforts accordingly.
21. Every operation is an information operation.
22. IO can deliver effects on enemy forces and commanders, as well as on civilian populations.
23. Adversaries can do things that you cannot. Be prepared for them.
24. Information-related capabilities that are not well integrated with operations are vulnerable to being overwhelmed.
25. It can take years to build credibility but only minutes to tear it down.
26. Sometimes, the most important effect in or through the information environment is the one you avoid.

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More than a century after its release, *The Defence of Duffer's Drift* by Major General Sir Ernest Swinton has become an enduring military classic. That piece of instructional fiction, in which the narrator learns from his operational mistakes over a series of dreams, has earned a place in military classrooms and has inspired military leaders, analysts, and historians. Indeed, the narrative form can be a powerful teaching and learning tool. To support U.S. Army efforts to better integrate information operations into operational planning, RAND has adapted the premise of General Swinton's work for a modern-day audience and a different problem set. The fictitious narrator, Captain I. N. Hindsight, takes readers repeatedly through the same mission over the course of six dreams in which she makes shortsighted decisions, critical miscalculations, and smaller mistakes that contribute to spectacular failures until the accumulated lessons ultimately allow her and the command she supports to succeed. The fabricated instructional scenario draws on actual historical operations, alternative directions that these operations could have taken, and realistic challenges that an Army information operations planner might face. The 26 concise lessons in this volume offer insight that, ideally, the practitioner will not need to acquire through hindsight.



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ISBN-10 0-8330-9775-X
ISBN-13 978-0-8330-9775-0

