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INFORMATION OPERATIONS: A HIGH READINESS TASK FORCE CAPABILITY?

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JCSP 40

Exercise Solo Flight

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EXERCISE *SOLO FLIGHT* – EXERCICE *SOLO FLIGHT*

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Word Count: 3053

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INFORMATION OPERATIONS: A HIGH READINESS TASK FORCE CAPABILITY?

“For to win one hundred battles is not the acme of skill. To subdue the enemy without fighting is the supreme excellence.”

- Sun Tzu

Introduction

U.S. Military doctrine identifies the information environment as the aggregate of individuals, organizations, and systems that collect, process, disseminate, or act on information. Canadian doctrine, dated though extant, defines Information Operations (IO) as actions taken in support of political and military objectives which influence decision makers by affecting other's information while exploiting and protecting one's own information. The Canadian Armed Forces (CAF) is on the cusp of endorsing the latest NATO IO doctrine.¹

The Canadian Army will force generate combat capable forces to meet the requirements of the Canada First Defence Strategy. In practical terms, 3rd Canadian Division is the next Lead Mounting Division for High Readiness Task Forces (HRTF)² for expeditionary operations. A deployed expeditionary task force will encompass capabilities and enablers that operate in the information environment within military operations across the full spectrum of conflict; Psychological Operations (PsyOps), Electronic Warfare (EW), Public Affairs (PA) and Media Operations, Civil Military Cooperation (CIMIC) and a number of inter-related activities. Currently, IO is identified within the Army Training Authority Direction and Guidance as capability gained during

¹ Discussions with staff from the Canadian Army CoE on IO in Kingston ON, February 2015.

² A HRTF is a temporary grouping of forces, generally joint, under one commander for a specific purpose or mission.

the Afghanistan campaign that must be retained, and an IO standard is considered in the staff capacity within the HRTF construct. Such direction, however, might not be provided the proper foundation in Land Operations doctrine.

This brief essay will determine the relevance of Information Operations as a Staff function and activities within the Canadian Army HRTF. Current Canadian, Allied and NATO doctrine in combination with seminal theory, Journal articles and papers will be analyzed. The conclusion will determine the need for Information Operations integration into the staff and planning fabric of the HRTF in order to fully achieve the assigned mission.

Information Operations

AJP 3.10, (2014) is the operational level NATO publication to provide direction and guidance for planning, conducting and assessing IO integration into operations. The 85-page publication is designed to provide combined, joint IO interoperability. The information environment is defined by AJP 3.10 as “an environment comprising the information itself, the individuals, organizations and systems that receive, process and convey information, and the cognitive, virtual and physical space in which this occurs”³ IO is defined as a staff function that analyzes, plans, assesses and integrates information activities, which are designed to affect information and/or information systems through

³ NATO. AJP 3.10. *Allied Joint Doctrine for Information Operations*. Edition A Version 1. NATO Standardization Agency. 2014. Footnote 4. 1-1.

lethal and non-lethal activities with the intent of creating psychological effects within the information environment.⁴

Although dated 1998, the current CAF doctrinal definition of IO is not necessarily out-dated, and indeed retains relevance in its definition:

...actions taken in support of political and military objectives which influence decision makers by affecting other's information while exploiting and protecting one's own information. This also includes IO conducted throughout the continuum of operations to achieve or promote specific military objectives over a specific adversary or adversaries. Defensive information operations activities are conducted on a continuous basis, in both peacetime and war, and are an inherent part of force employment across the full range of military operations. Information operations may involve complex legal and policy issues requiring careful review and national-level coordination and approval.⁵

The doctrine states the strategic aims of IO are relevant in peacetime and against potential adversaries.⁶ Considering the date of the publication, the discussion of IO as an enabler to the Commander seems contemporary. The pervasiveness of IO technologies is stated to affect all aspects of operational planning and conduct, which requires “carefully conceived, coordinated and executed.”⁷ To integrate IO planning and coordination, the IO Coordination Cell (IOCC) is imperative to success at the operational level. The IOCC is formed from representatives of each staff branch and IO component and/or enabler. A typical IOCC is illustrated at Figure 1. At the operational level, the IOCC is the focal point for the synchronization and coordination of all available IO resources [components

⁴ *Ibid.*, 1-5

⁵ Canada. National Defence. B-GG-005-004/AF-010. *CF Information Operations*. 1998-04-15. 1-6.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 1-1.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 1-14.

and capabilities] and efforts to accomplish mission objectives.⁸ IO at the operational level is discussed within the context of the Operational Planning Process (OPP).⁹

The CAF doctrinal guidance on IO at the operational level is quite clear as being relevant in training and operations, across the full spectrum of operations.

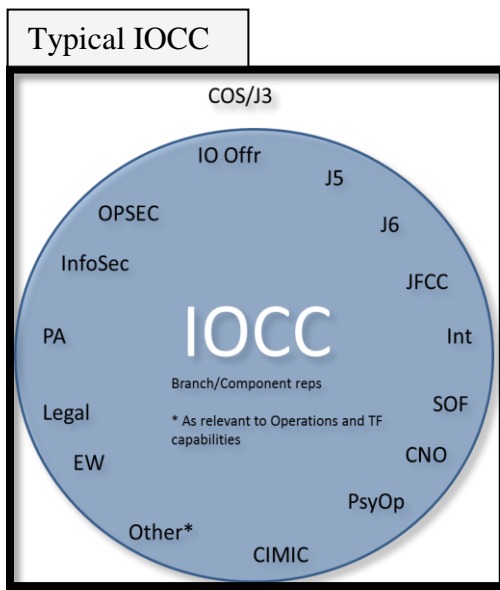


Figure 1 - Typical IOCC. Adapted from CF IO Doctrine

Canadian Army IO doctrine is not available.¹⁰ However, IO is provided a section in the capstone Land Operations Doctrine (2008) for the conduct of land operations. While noting the CAF IO doctrine definition, the section utilizes the NATO AAP-3.10 definition as ideal to the IO construct, quite possibly due to it providing a more

⁸ *Ibid.*, 5-3.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 5-6 – 5-7.

¹⁰ Although it remains referenced in the ATA D&G, the IO CoE maintains that the Land Force Information Operations doctrine publication is no longer extant. It could not be found in the online Army publications.

operational or tactical tone.¹¹ The document section describes IO as a coordinated collection of capabilities, vice an operation unto itself that focuses on three core activity areas; Influence Activity, Counter-Command activity and Information Protection Activity. The key physical and cognitive activities that support the core activities, outlined in Table 1, are reflective of both the NATO and CAF IO doctrine publications. The section describes the main effort IO of land operations being Influence Activity; PsyOps, PPP, deception, CIMIC and PA. The section weighs heavily on activities conducted on the psychological plane and goes so far as to state that IO is “based on influencing by sending a message by means of some sort of messenger.” Vignettes are highlighted to illustrate the effectiveness of message delivery.¹² To its detriment, the section appears to freely exchange IO and Influence Activity as being entirely the same. The section does not discuss the utility of coordinating all of the IO enablers and capabilities available to the operational commander and, therefore, nor is the IOCC considered in the planning and execution context. Adding to the contextual confusion are prior sections in the doctrine related to Influence Activity that are entirely similar in text.¹³ The IO illustrative figures are, with minimal changes in text, the comprehensive operations illustrations in a previous section.¹⁴ Important is the illustrations’ exclusion of fires (physical destruction) as integral to IO and the IOCC framework.

¹¹ Canada, National Defence. B-GL-300-001/FP-001. *Land Operations*. Chief of the Land Staff. Kingston. ON. 2008. 5-44.

¹² *Ibid.*, 5-60, 5-61, 5-62, 5-63 – 5-64.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 5-5 – 5-8.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 5-10, 5-11

Table 1 - IO Key Activities

Information Operations Key Activities	
Psychological Operations (PsyOps)	To influence perceptions, attitudes, and behaviour of selected individual or groups in accordance with IO objectives.
Presence, Posture and Profile (PPP)	Seeks to send or support a message by means of the manner in which troops deal with the populace that supports the IO and overall objectives.
Civil-Military Cooperation (CIMIC)	A key aspect of IO that facilitates operations in relation to civil authorities and non-military organizations
Public Information (PA)	PA or Media Ops protect the credibility and legitimacy of operations and promote understanding.
Deception	Operational level measures designed to mislead adversaries by manipulation, distortion and falsification.
Physical Destruction	Physical attacks on the adversary's C2 to affect their capability and thus their understanding, perception and behaviour.
Operations Security (OPSEC)	Used to identify and protect information that is essential to the success of the campaign.
Information Security	Protects the integrity, confidentiality, and availability of information through procedural, technical and administrative controls.
Electronic Warfare	Temporary or permanent effects on adversary critical information and/or systems by which it is transmitted.
Computer Network Operations (CNO)	CNO comprises attack, exploitation and defence.

Source: National Defence, "Land Operations", 5-47 – 5-50.

The Army Strategy and other Trends

CAF IO policy for international operations states that CAF commanders will continually conduct and ensure IO is a fundamental element of international operations. Environmental Chiefs of Staff (eg Army) are to ensure IO becomes integral to forces

generation, operational planning and training as well as the execution of IO during operations.¹⁵ This policy remains extant in the current Army Strategy (2014) that seeks to meet and subdue increasingly sophisticated and capable state and non-state adversaries. In the Adaptive Dispersed Operations context of the future army, the requirement for an information operations capability is threaded among the illustrations of the major combat functions of Command, Sense, Act, Shield and Sustain. Army IO is highlighted as a capability that must be developed to provide the requisite multi-purpose, combat capable forces needed to counter the developing global threat.¹⁶

The Canadian Army Land Warfare Centre also underlines the importance of the information environment to the future Army in its “No Man’s Land” publication.¹⁷ While the topic of cyber operations highlights IO enablers and operational considerations, the imperative of OPSEC in perhaps an innocuous circumstance underlines the ubiquitous nature of IO.¹⁸

Such considerations are similar to our North American defence and expeditionary coalition partner, the U.S. The U.S. Army statement of 20 Warfighting Challenges threads IO considerations into many of them.¹⁹ Lt Gen H.R McMaster (2015) in his Military Review article noted the political, human and contested wills that describe future

¹⁵ Canada. National Defence. *Information Operations Policy for CF International Operations*. COS J3 Information Operations. Date unknown

¹⁶ Canada. National Defence. *Advancing With Purpose. The Army Strategy*. Director Army Staff. Ottawa. 15-17, 21.

¹⁷ Canada. National Defence. *No Man’s Land: Tech Considerations for Canada’s Future Army*. Canadian Army Land Warfare Centre. Kingston, ON. 2014.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, Army cyber discussion at Chap 5 Part 4, biometrics example at 2-81.

¹⁹ United States. US Army. Army Warfighting Challenges Online.
<http://www.arcic.army.mil/Initiatives/army-warfighting-challenges.aspx>

war. He further alludes to the importance of knowledge and information to understanding the theatre environment.²⁰ Nor is the imperative of IO in military operations lost to main stream media. BBC News diplomatic correspondent Jonathan Marcus reported on the shaping of the battlefield through information as the new “frontline.”²¹

None of this thinking is new, however. Sun Tzu wrote of the imperative of the wise general having the foreknowledge the political, diplomatic and economic factors of the enemy in war. Such knowledge of the enemy situation could provide for control of the moral factor to attacking an enemy sluggish and homesick.²² More pointedly, he wrote, “For to win one hundred victories in one hundred battles is not the acme of skill. To subdue the enemy without fighting is the supreme excellence.”²³ Sun Tzu placed the greatest importance on attacking the enemy’s strategy before attacking their forces. In effect, he advocated the IO capability of influencing the decision makers.

IO is also relevant in Clausewitz’s theory of war. Clausewitz described war as a political conflict dominated by the violence and moral factors. Since war is a political act carried on by other means, Clausewitz theory provides a foundation of IO being relevant not only across the spectrum of operations, but of IO as intrinsic within the spectrum of political activity to conducting combat. The political object is the original motive of war

²⁰ Lt Gen H.R. McMaster. “*Continuity and Change. The Army Operating Concept and Clear Thinking About Future War*” in Military Review. March/April 2015.

²¹ Jonathan Marcus. “*Afghanistan conflict an ‘information war.’*” BBC News. 11 February 2010. http://news.bbc.co.uk/go/pr/fr/-/2/hi/south_asia/8511477.stm accessed 19 may 2015

²² General Tao Hanzhang. *SunTzu’s Art of War, the Modern Chinese Interpretation*. Sterling Publishing Co., Inc. New York. 1987. 77-79.

²³ *Ibid.*, 99.

and it affects the people upon which it is conducted, with the political and military objectives adjusting as the will of the adversary is compelled to comply.²⁴

High Readiness Task Force

Doctrine and institutional strategy, as outlined in the preceding sections, support the concept of IO integration into the fabric of the Army HRTF. The HRTF is the Canadian Army organizational structure that is force generated (FG) on a cyclical basis to meet CAF land manoeuvre force commitments in support of the Canada First Defence Strategy, in particular expeditionary Operations. The HRTF is FG under the Direction and Guidance of the Army Training Authority (ATA D&G). The ATA D&G for HRTF 2016 will direct 3rd Canadian Division (3 Cdn Div) to FG specific capabilities from integral and external resources and also provides the framework for the Battle Task Standards (BTS) the HRTF must exercise in order to be considered Operationally Ready (OpRed) for its tasks. Within the capabilities of the HRTF, to be based on 1 Canadian Brigade Group (1CMBG), are a number of capabilities identified with IO, specifically the All Source Intelligence Centre (ASIC), PsyOps, CIMIC, EW and PA. These capabilities have BTS identified that provide OpRed measures for the respective capability.

The concluding remarks of the ATA D&G make specific reference to the importance of retaining capability developments accrued through the experience in Afghanistan. These are noted as imperative in the context of training for “A war”, the unknown next operational theatre. In particular, singled out for special attention are IED

²⁴ Carl Von Clausewitz. “*On War*” Edited by Anatol Rapoport. Penguin Books. Maryland USA. 1968. 109-110.

and IO.²⁵ This is reflected in the BTS requirements. In particular, Develop and Integrate IO is directed in the Formation Level (level 7) BTS, which standard is to achieve information superiority through tactical, operational and strategic IO. All IO components and capacities are to be utilized, and the IO component plans are to be coordinated at the Brigade Group headquarters.²⁶ IO BTS is also directed for Level 6, Battle Group, and is a mirror of the higher level BTS.²⁷ For both of the Level 7 and Level 6 IO BTS, the functional BTS for the IO components and capabilities are included as supporting the BTS objectives. The IO BTS relationships for Level 7 are illustrated in Table 2.

Table 2 - IO BTS from HRTF ATA Directive

HRTF Level 7 IO BTS Illustration	
BTS	Functional BTS
A07701005S DEVELOP AND INTEGRATE INFORMATION OPERATIONS	A06701005E DEVELOP AND INTEGRATE INFORMATION OPERATIONS (Level 6) C02601357E DIRECT AND PERFORM CIMIC OPERATIONS X04711360E PLAN PSYOPS EFFECTS A06704042S DEVELOP AND ENSURE OPSEC Q02701015E OPERATE AN ISTAR CC Q00001009E PROVIDE INTELLIGENCE SUPPORT TO

²⁵ Canada. National Defence. (Advance Draft for staff review) CATDC. 4500-1 (Army CT HR) June 2015. *Army Training Authority High Readiness Training Directive 2015-2016*. 8/10.

²⁶ Canada. National Defence. B-GL-383-002/PS-002 *Battle Task Standards Volume 2, Amendment List 7*, dated November 2010. 14-10.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 1-63

	<p>PLANNING</p> <p>Q00002010E PROVIDE INTELLIGENCE SUPPORT TO OPERATIONS</p> <p>S14701028E PLAN AND DIRECT CIS SUPPORT</p> <p>S23401040E PROVIDE EW SUPPORT</p> <p>A06701045E,INTEGRATE ISTAR PLAN</p>
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The IO Imperative

It is clear that IO is not a new concept and that it remains a current and future requirement. CAF doctrine provides the imperative of IO utilization across the spectrum of operations at the operational level. NATO doctrine also provides guidance to the importance of IO at the operational level. This is particularly important to the Army in considering the majority of our joint deployed operations will be, arguably, in partnership the US and/or other NATO allies. The HRTF, operational level commander will be responsible for the command and control of capable land forces for such deployments, provided ATA direction to prepare the force and Land Operations doctrine to guide the development of the HRTF to prepare for operations. Therein lies the conundrum. First, the HRTF will be provided enablers and capabilities for which ATA BTS direction is given, but for which the Land Operations doctrine IO section does not support; for example EW. Second, the ATA direction provides only some IO BTS integration. Notably absent in the IO BTS are the functional BTS for physical destruction (fires), PPP and PA. Third, there is the strong implication from Land Operations doctrine that IO is, de facto, Influence Activity. Since the doctrine separates that physiological plane activity

from the physical plane activity, there is no guidance on the integration of IO within the framework of comprehensive operations. IO, mislabelled Influence Activity, is relegated to messages and influence outside of kinetic operations.

The dysfunction within the context of doctrine and direction might well influence commanders and staff to perceive IO as a function of coordination and activities that support the operational level decision rather than activities requiring coordination and integration as a functional part of the operational decision process. One example comes from a recent Command Post (staff) exercise where the EW detachment was delegated fully to the ASIC as a sensor for intelligence. The result was the utilization of only one of many capabilities of the detachment. EW can provide multiple capabilities for detection and disruption of the adversary electromagnetic spectrum to defeat their command and control network and nodes. In addition, the detachment can coordinate the resources of other EW capabilities to support the effects desired by the commander, and to the needs of the subordinate units. The problem was seen as the EW assets requiring force protection on the ground, with no one unit of the force being in a position to continually provide for it since their focus was to close with and destroy the enemy. The delegation to ASIC provided no opportunities for coordinated EW into the tactical execution of the operational plan to render inoperable the enemy forces, which planning would have inherently allowed for EW force protection.²⁸ The example illustrates that IO capabilities accepted as supporting a plan rather than being integral to the process of planning will not leverage the fullness of their combined, coordinated effort.

²⁸ As noted by the author, an Influence Activity staff planner, during the Command Post Exercise.

In effect, the focus on the kinetic activities of fire and manoeuvre to destroy enemy forces to meet the mission might so consume the HRTF command and staff that IO could be all but forgot. Sun Tsu and Clausewitz would disagree with such an approach. Sun Tsu advocated that the skilled in war were able to subdue the enemy's army without battle, to use deception to lure the enemy into an unfavourable position, and gather intelligence to know enemy strength and weakness.²⁹ Sun Tzu infused all the advantages of the art of war into the capable General, both the physical and psychological. Similarly, Clausewitz did not separate the physical and psychological factors of warfare in meeting the political goals of the campaign. He contends that even after a military power is destroyed and a country is conquered, the War cannot be considered at an end until the will of the enemy is also subdued.³⁰ The will of the enemy is as imperative to the commander as the destruction of their forces.

Conclusion

The complexities of the contemporary global environment do not dilute the theories of Sun Tzu and Clausewitz. Contemporary writing underlines their theories against the backdrop of global networks. The imperative of information operations in the suite of capabilities to defeat the adversary is paramount for the future forces of Canada and of our US defence and security partner. Despite the ATA direction for IO in the HRTF in order to be operationally ready, it is not without flaws and the operational level commander is not well served by the discussion of IO in the Land Operations doctrine to resolve those deficiencies. However, the NATO and CAF IO doctrine provide guidance

²⁹ Hanzhang. "*Sun Tzu's*", 99, 106.

³⁰ Clausewitz. "*On War*", 123, 125-127.

to the concept of IO, vice Influence Activity, and its integration and coordination at the operational level. In preparing their HRTF for the next mission when called upon, those operational level commanders should implement the guidance of the NATO and CAF doctrine, and the relevant aspects of Land Operations doctrine with the guidance of the Army IO Centre.³¹ To provide the context of IO importance to the completion of the mission, the HRTF Headquarters Chief of Staff (COS) should be responsible for IO with a dedicated field grade officer assigned for the detailed coordination of all HRTF IO capabilities and activity utilizing an IOCC construct.

It would be highly unlikely that any deployed HRTF would defeat the adversary without battle, no matter the lowest of intensity or duration. Yet IO remains a viable and powerful capability with the potential of reducing battle casualties and the duration of expeditionary engagement. It is in the best interests of the HRTF commander to fully integrate IO.

³¹ IO Staff at Peace Support Training Centre, Kingston.

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