

CHAPTER 2

Capabilities and Limitations



PSYOP may support operations of general purpose (GP) and SO forces, provide assets for non-PSYOP dissemination missions, and provide the commander with a method of informing his opponent of his alternatives. The PSYOP unit's ability to accomplish its mission depends on the scope of the mission and the PSYOP assets available. A full understanding of the commander's mission and the type of support required is critical to the success of the PSYOP support.

Role and Responsibilities

PSYOP units operate as support units, not as stand-alone forces. Their primary role is to support other military units or U.S. Government agencies in accomplishing U.S. national objectives. Their overall responsibilities are to—

- Assess the psychological impact of military operations.
- Advise the military commander or the Department of Defense (DOD) mission director on PSYOP campaigns.
- Develop and conduct PSYOP campaigns in support of military operations.
- Counter hostile propaganda.

Other Uses of PSYOP Assets

PSYOP units may support other military units in a variety of ways. PSYOP assets and expertise may support a commander's other mission-oriented activities, such as disaster relief. In domestic cases, the commander must ensure PSYOP assets are being employed in a dissemination role only and not to project a PSYOP message. PSYOP assets may also support a commander's deception plan or the activities of the military or other government agencies. (See Appendix A.)

PSYOP assets provide target audience information and regional and language expertise. They also disseminate information and products that explain the intent

of military operations to target audiences. For example, a commander may use PSYOP assets to inform civilians that the purpose of an operation is to reduce civilian casualties and minimize their interference in the operation.

Considerations in Using PSYOP Assets

Commanders must consider PSYOP capabilities and limitations when integrating PSYOP in other military operations (Figure 2-1). As in all military operations, time is a major consideration. To ensure effective PSYOP support, commanders must give timely predeployment notification to PSYOP assets. The PSYOP campaign begins before the main body of combat forces arrives in country. In addition, operations officers should integrate PSYOP liaisons directly into their staff to ensure continuous PSYOP input during the planning process.

Accurate and complete information about the major factors that influence the target audience is often not part of the intelligence collection plan. Such lack of information restricts the number of exploitable vulnerabilities. Restrictions on news, public discussion, and travel limit the information available to evaluate PSYOP effectiveness.

Effective PSYOP require imaginative personnel who know the target audience's language. These personnel must also understand the political, economic, cultural, social, and ideological conditions of the target audience.

Capabilities	Limitations
Amplifying the effects of military operations.	Untimely predeployment notification to PSYOP assets.
Informing audiences in denied areas.	Insufficient PSYOP input during planning process.
Overcoming censorship, illiteracy, or interrupted communications systems.	Inaccessibility of accurate and complete information.
Giving guidance or reassurance to isolated or disorganized audiences.	Restrictions that limit information needed to evaluate PSYOP effectiveness.
Targeting opponent audiences to diminish morale or to reduce the will to resist.	Lack of qualified personnel.
Sustaining the morale of resistance fighters.	Inaccessibility of potential target audience.
Exploiting ethnic, cultural, religious, or economic differences.	
Giving opponent audiences alternatives to continued conflict.	
Influencing local support for insurgents.	
Supporting deception operations.	
Projecting a favorable image of U.S. actions.	
Using face-to-face communication, key communicators, and mass media to engage every practical avenue to influence the behavior of the target audience.	

Figure 2-1. PSYOP capabilities and limitations.

Target audiences may be beyond the limits of PSYOP targeting methods due to physical or policy limitations. In these cases, PSYOP planners must refer these targets to other agencies for targeting.

Operational Continuum

PSYOP units function in peace, conflict, and war. PSYOP may be strategic, operational, tactical, or consolidation. Strategic, operational, and tactical PSYOP depend on the size of the target audience, the geographical area in which the programs are applied, and the time span in which observable results are required. Consolidation PSYOP are designed to return an area to normalcy in the aftermath of war or conflict.

Strategic PSYOP

Strategic PSYOP are generally designed to further broad or long-term aims in support of general strategic planning, with measurable effects becoming visible in the indefinite future. U.S. Army PSYOP forces can be task organized to support strategic PSYOP. Strategic PSYOP objectives and conditions among opponents (opportunities) that may contribute to reaching those objectives are shown in Figure 2-2, page 2-4.

Operational PSYOP

Operational PSYOP are regional or national in scope. They are directed at regional target audiences and planned to change audience behavior more rapidly than strategic PSYOP. Operational PSYOP demonstrate characteristics of both strategic and tactical PSYOP and are the bridge that links them together. Operational PSYOP objectives and conditions among opponents (opportunities) that may contribute to reaching those objectives are shown in Figure 2-3, page 2-4.

Tactical PSYOP

Tactical PSYOP are prepared and executed in objective areas in direct support of military tactical operations. Tactical PSYOP objectives and conditions among opponents (opportunities) that may contribute to reaching those objectives are shown in Figure 2-4, page 2-5.

Consolidation PSYOP

Consolidation PSYOP are conducted in newly accessible or formerly opponent-held territory. Emphasis is on a return to normalcy. The objectives of consolidation PSYOP and conditions among opponents (opportunities) that can contribute to reaching those objectives are shown in Figure 2-5, page 2-5.

Objectives

Support and explain U.S. political policies, aims, and objectives abroad.

Relate the U.S. political policies and aims to the aspirations of the target audience, where practical.

Arouse public opinion or assert political pressures for or against a military operation.

Influence the design of foreign strategy and tactics.

Amplify economics and other nonviolent forms of sanctions against an opponent.

Stimulate dissension between opponents' military and political elites.

Undermine confidence in the opponents' leadership and aims.

Lower the morale and efficiency of opponent civilians.

Encourage disaffection among opponents on the part of ethnic, social, political, economic, and other elements having grievances against each other.

Interfere with opponent's communication and control systems.

Elicit the support of neutral audiences or promote continued neutrality.

Make friendly leaders stronger and opponent leaders weaker.

Give hope and moral support to resistance elements.

Support a counterelite.

Gain support in newly accessible areas.

Augment or complement tactical PSYOP.

Opportunities for PSYOP Success

Military successes of friendly forces.

Shortages of food, housing, clothing, or other necessities in the target area.

Graft and corruption among opponent leaders.

Manpower shortages in the opponent's military.

Opponent country's inflation and unequal and exorbitant taxation.

Opponent country's racial and religious intolerance.

Political disunity and lack of confidence in opponent leaders.

Opponent's use of terrorism, midnight soldiers and arrests, censorship, travel restrictions, and other repressive activities.

Figure 2-2. Strategic PSYOP.

Objectives

Prepare target country's population for the introduction of U.S. forces.

Minimize civilian interference with U.S. operations.

Capitalize on opponent's defeats.

Counter enemy propaganda.

Encourage disaffection of opponent's forces and population.

Opportunities for PSYOP Success

Inability of opponent's government to provide for the needs of the people.

Failure of draftees or reservists to report for duty.

Defections and/or desertions.

Loss of internal communications (radio, TV, telephone, computer nets).

Failure of transportation systems.

Failure of opponent governments' allies to come to their assistance.

Increasing international support for U.S. efforts.

Inability of opponent's forces to defeat or inflict damage on U.S. or allied forces.

Figure 2-3. Operational PSYOP.

Objectives

Lower the opponent's morale and combat efficiency.
 Increase the psychological impact of lethal weapons.
 Support deception operations.
 Facilitate the occupation of opponent's areas by delivering ultimatums and giving rallying point locations or directions for the cessation of hostilities.
 Support strategic PSYOP by furnishing detailed, timely information on local vulnerabilities that may be used in strategic plans and operations.
 Give information and directions to friendly elements operating in the target area.
 Give specific, direct support to tactical commanders on short notice.
 Build a favorable image of U.S. soldiers and leaders.

Opportunities for PSYOP Success

Numerous defeats and high casualties.
 Heavy and effective artillery or bombardment.
 Precarious military situations.
 Insufficient or inferior supplies and equipment.
 Bad news from the homefront.
 Excessive periods of combat.
 Ethnic or political minorities forced into combat against their will.
 Overaged, inexperienced, or untrained troops and leaders.
 Poorly indoctrinated soldiers.
 Epidemics and lack of adequate medical services.

Figure 2-4. Tactical PSYOP

Objectives

Promote a favorable image of U.S. and allied forces.
 Enlist the support of key communicators.
 Enlist the cooperation of the population in restoring order.
 Reduce support for saboteurs.
 Promote rebuilding and reorganization of a functional system of government.

Opportunities for PSYOP Success

Improvement in the physical and psychological well-being of the target audience.
 Reparations for war damages.
 Repatriation of dislocated civilians.
 Resumption of social services.
 Resumption of open communications.
 Restoration of human rights.
 Resumption of industry and trade.

Figure 2-5. Consolidation PSYOP.

Summary

PSYOP derive their effectiveness from being an integral part of the operation from start to finish. They are not substitutes for combat power, but they may significantly enhance the combat unit's mission accomplishment. When skillfully and closely integrated with military and political actions, they act as a catalyst and can often make the difference between success and failure in mission accomplishment.