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# STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION:  A DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE APPROACH

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# ABSTRACT

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US Government (USG) Strategic Communication (SC) is neither a process to be implemented, nor a capability to be employed, rather, it is an effect achieved through the exercise of all elements of national power. Integrating military operations with other USG activities to achieve SC goals is the responsibility of the Department of Defense (DoD). DoD has developed a SC Roadmap in order to institutionalize a Strategic Communication process within DoD. This focus on SC as a distinct executable process, rather than an outcome, is an impediment to progress toward achieving SC goals. The SC Roadmap fails to implement the Quadrennial Defense Review's vision for SC, and neglects proper strategic controls to ensure unity of effort is maintained in DOD support to SC.  These failures degrade the competitive position of the U.S. in the international information environment.  This essay will show why an effective USG SC strategy is necessary, and will seek to define DOD support to SC.  Further, this essay will show that effective DOD support to SC can only be achieved by developing an SC culture within DOD, and that existing capabilities must be strengthened in order to ensure strategic competitiveness and effective USG SC during the next century.

# STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION:  A DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE APPROACH

> Policies matter. Mistakes dismay our friends and provide enemies with unintentional assistance. … Strategic communication is a vital component of U.S. national security. It is in crisis, and it must be transformed with a strength of purpose that matches our commitment to diplomacy, defense, intelligence, law enforcement, and homeland security.[1]

In its 2004 report on Strategic Communication (SC) the Defense Science Board (DSB) highlights this accurate yet pessimistic view of the state of United States Government (USG) SC.  Under the heading "Strategic Communication", the 2006 Quadrennial Defense Review (QDR), serving as a roadmap to change within the Department of Defense (DOD), stated the requirement to "integrate communications efforts horizontally across the enterprise to link information and communication issues with broader policies, plans and actions."[2]  Most recently, in September of 2006, the DOD published the Strategic Communication Roadmap (hereinafter called the Roadmap) to ensure that the objectives identified in the QDR are achieved.  While the Roadmap does not constitute policy in the strictest sense, it serves as the guiding force to strategic communication policy being developed within DOD by providing a plan of action and milestones.  Curiously, however, the first task identified in the Roadmap is to establish a new SC organization, to facilitate horizontal, integrated communication efforts.  Such a move presupposes that there is not already a mechanism established to serve this purpose.  Thus, the Roadmap adds an additional vertical layer of coordination to achieve horizontal integration, and focuses on only a few "primary supporting capabilities", rather than the integration of all capabilities in support of USG SC objectives.  Pursuit of this policy will further degrade the unity of effort necessary to integrate *all* DOD capabilities toward achieving USG SC goals, and will continue to marginalize the effectiveness of supporting communication capabilities by creating redundant communication architecture within DOD.

The fundamental problem lies in the lack of a USG SC strategy, and the absence of a precise definition of SC.  As a result, there is an unclear understanding of department's supporting role in USG SC that has yielded a flawed approach to the problem within DOD.  Effective Strategic Communication is indeed a vital component of U.S. national security, and in the QDR the DOD has properly articulated its vision of the department's role in supporting the integration of its military capabilities in support of USG SC efforts.   However, the SC Roadmap fails to properly implement, and even alters this vision by poorly interpreting the QDR SC imperative, and neglecting proper strategic controls to ensure unity of effort is maintained in DOD support to USG SC.  These failures degrade the competitive position of the U.S. in the

international information environment.  This essay will show why an effective USG SC strategy is necessary, and will seek to define DOD support to SC.  Further, this essay will show that effective DOD support to SC can only be achieved by developing an SC culture within DOD, and that existing capabilities must be strengthened in order to ensure strategic competitiveness and effective USG SC during the next century.

<u>Strategic Communication:  If America Does Not Explain Itself, the Extremists Will Do It for Us</u>

The USG has no SC strategy to serve as the foundation for integration of all USG efforts to effectively communicate its policies to the world.   As a result, in the world at large, and especially in the Muslim and Arab world today, the USG is challenged to explain itself:  to explain why the U.S. is in Iraq and Afghanistan; why the U.S. is not in Darfur or Iran; why Israel is such and indispensable ally; why the USG supports governments that suppress, sometimes brutally, the very freedoms it professes to represent, and so on.  The USG, through its agencies and departments, implements policies and engages audiences across the globe.  Its policies and actions speak for themselves, but its ability to meet the challenge of explanation through mutually supporting actions and messages from all elements of the USG interagency has been, and continues to be, inadequate.

Across the globe people view Americans with varying levels of confidence and/or skepticism regarding their belief that America is a beacon of freedom and tolerance.  Arguably, a vast majority of the global population has only indirect experience with the U.S. and its agents.  Invariably, their beliefs are shaped by their own personal experience; by influence from key communicators within their societies, and within the context of their own social, economic and political environment.  Nowhere is this felt more acutely than in the Arab and Muslim world.  As the U.S. seeks to marginalize extremists, success in this endeavor is determined primarily by its policies.[3]  U.S. adversaries understand their own populations better than the U.S. does.  They understand how to communicate with them better than the U.S. does, and they understand the deep seated resentments and historical animosities toward the U.S. that motivate their audiences to accept and in some cases act on their own version of the truth.  U.S. adversaries leverage this advantage to portray U.S. policies, both historical and contemporary, in a negative light.

The U.S. message of freedom and tolerance, though powerful, is not powerful enough alone, to overcome this advantage.  Ambassador Karen Hughes, the current Under Secretary of State for Public Diplomacy and Public Affairs, believes that "given a fair hearing and a free choice, people will choose freedom over tyranny and tolerance over extremism every time."[4]

This statement is a great sound-bite, but it must be carefully considered to grasp the full impact of its meaning. Freedom and tolerance are the messages, but a fair hearing and free choice are the ultimate conditions to be established in order for the message to be heard, believed, and ideally, acted upon. Establishing these conditions locally, regionally, nationally and internationally, involves so much more than just words. It demands a synchronized and coordinated effort of mutually supporting actions and messages by all elements of the USG.

There continues to be a need for a national communication strategy that provides objectives and guidance for both regional and transnational issues, and a mechanism to coordinate all interagency informational efforts at the national level.[5] The effort to accomplish this is underway within the Department of State (DOS) under the leadership of Ambassador Hughes. Since September 11, 2001 DOS has expanded its Public Diplomacy (PD) efforts globally; and echoing the belief of Secretary of State Rice in the "integration of public diplomacy, of message, of communications and policy"[6] Ambassador Hughes developed a strategic framework to focus DOS PD efforts.[7] This framework, however, is specific to the DOS. As the lead for the Policy Coordination Committee on Public Diplomacy and Strategic Communications, Ambassador Hughes is responsible for ensuring that *all* agencies are working together in this effort. Hence, interagency coordination continues to be insufficient. The Government Accounting Office, in its May 2006 report on Public Diplomacy comments on this chronic inadequacy stating: "since 2003, we have reported on the lack of strategic elements to guide U.S. public diplomacy efforts. Despite several attempts, the United States still lacks an interagency public diplomacy strategy."[8]

Defining DOD Support to Strategic Communication

Despite the absence of a unifying U.S. national SC strategy, DOD included SC as a specific area of study in its 2005 Quadrennial Defense Review. The QDR did not provide a specific definition of SC in its final report, but acknowledged that SC is a government-wide responsibility and made the following finding:

> The Department must instill communication assessments and processes into its culture, developing programs, plans, policy, information and themes to support Combatant Commanders that reflect the U.S. Government's overall strategic objectives.[9]

Stating the DOD SC imperative in this way provides an adequate point of departure for the development of SC policy within DOD, because it describes the necessary link between DOD communication efforts and USG overall strategic objectives. Absent a definition, however, this

statement may lead one to believe that DOD "communication assessments and processes" are SC; when, in fact, they are capabilities necessary to successfully support USG SC.

If SC is not precisely understood, DOD and the interagency are doomed to wrestle with its implementation. The SC Roadmap defines SC as a USG process:

> Focused United States Government processes and efforts to understand and engage key audiences to create, strengthen, or preserve conditions favorable to advance national interests and objectives through the use of coordinated information, themes, plans, programs and actions synchronized with other elements of national power. [10]

Jeffrey Jones, the former Director for Strategic Communications and Information on the National Security Council defined it as "the synchronized coordination of statecraft, public affairs, public diplomacy, military information operations, and other activities, reinforced by political, economic, military and other actions, to advance U.S. foreign policy objectives."[11] In an effort to establish a common reference for members of the Interagency Strategic Communication Fusion Team in a presentation on SC and PSYOP a simple definition was provided: "the directed transmission of USG "intent" through a supporting architecture to an audience for a reason that supports U.S. goals or objectives."[12]

These efforts to define SC, offer clarity, but highlight the difficulty in providing a single unifying definition. The absence of an official national SC definition, like the absence of a strategy convolutes USG efforts to develop SC policy. In the end, the DOD SC Roadmap definition serves very well as DOD attempts to develop its role in support of it. Common to all definitions is the representation of SC as a USG process. The use of USG to describe SC throughout this essay are redundant with this distinction in mind. All SC in this context, are USG activities. The contributions made by the various USG departments and agencies (including DOD) are not, by themselves, SC. Rather, SC is the synchronized, and integrated coordination (see Jeff Jones' definition above) of these contributions in order to achieve the broader USG strategic communication objectives. The distinction is very simple. DOD, DOS and other USG departments and agencies support SC by conducting various communication activities such as Public Diplomacy (PD), Public Affairs (PA) or Psychological Operations (PSYOP). Additionally, other activities are conducted, such as deployment of a carrier group, funding of a new weapons system or Theater Security Cooperation. Like the specific communication activities, these actions are conducted to achieve a specific aim within the department or agency conducting them, but when viewed as a part of all USG activities, in support of national objectives, they also support SC.

SC can be compared to a wristwatch.  The purpose or overall objective of the watch is to provide accurate time.  Interagency communication activities are analogous to the hands on the watch.  These are the specific activities conducted to translate the action within the watch into symbols that represent accurate time to the owner (audience) of the watch.  The gears and springs and screws within the movement of the watch are all of the other activities that must be conducted in order to provide accurate time.  The purpose of the movement is to maintain the steady motion of the hands; a more limited objective than providing accurate time.  As individual components, the gears and hands are not a wristwatch, and their action in isolation does not provide accurate time.  However, when all components of the watch are operating together in a synchronized and coordinated fashion for the purpose of providing accurate time, they are a wristwatch.  Activities conducted by USG departments and agencies, when performed in isolation are not SC, and serve limited objectives, but when coordinated and synchronized with integrated communication activities, in support of broader national objectives are SC.

Proper development of SC policy demands an understanding of this precise distinction between USG SC, and the various capabilities and actions necessary to support it.  The DOD SC imperative above calls for the strengthening and improved integration of DOD communication capabilities within the existing DOD culture, and framework for planning and execution.  The Strategic Communication Roadmap, however, in attempting to provide implementing guidance has redefined the imperative to "strengthening *Strategic Communication processes.*"  This focus on a Strategic Communication process within DOD rather than existing capabilities and processes has tremendous impact on the outcome.  By attempting to create a new "Strategic Communication" process, where none previously existed within DOD, the writers of the Roadmap are creating a redundant mechanism for integration.

At first glance, this appears reasonable; if we are not effectively supporting SC, then greater oversight must be established.  But an inadequate USG SC effort does not necessarily equate to a requirement to reinvent DOD communication processes.  In its September 2004 report on Strategic Communication, the Defense Science Board (DSB) makes a strong case for implementing a new vision for Strategic Communication, but nowhere in the document does the board explicitly state that DOD communication processes are inadequate.  Rather, the DSB recommends an increased emphasis on existing capabilities, processes and activities that support SC.  However, the SC Roadmap gives notice of intent to create a new process by stating: "To this end, OSD and the Joint Staff will develop a staff process that integrates and supports Strategic Communication initiatives."[13]

Responsibility for coordination of interagency activities in support of SC rests with the Policy Coordination Committee (PCC) on Public Diplomacy and Strategic Communications led by the Under Secretary of State for Public Diplomacy and Public Affairs.[14]  There is an inherent responsibility for each USG agency to integrate and synchronize internally.  Within DOD, responsibility for integration of communication activities with policies, plans and operations rests with Combatant Commanders.  The weak link is effective integration into the overall USG effort. Within DOD, responsibility for integration with the interagency resides with OSD and the Joint Staff.

Implementing the QDR Vision For SC

"Clearly, if you are going to do well over time, you have to have some ability---yourself or in combination with others—to come up with a vision…and then follow it up with believable and implementable action plans"[15]  The 2006 QDR identifies SC as an area of particular emphasis for DOD, and provides the guiding vision to strengthen its support of efforts led by the Department of State for integration of SC across the federal government.  The SC Roadmap serves as the guide or action plan for implementing this vision.  Overall the Roadmap provides an effective and coherent plan for improving DOD support to SC except for one flaw; it's imperative to establish Strategic Communication architecture within the department.[16]

"Shaping the choices of countries at strategic crossroads" is one of four priority areas for examination the QDR identifies in order to effectively operationalize the U.S. National Security Strategy.  To this end, the examination recognized that "security cooperation and engagement activities…to increase understanding, strengthen allies and partners, and accurately communicate U.S. objectives and intent" require new authorities and an improved interagency process.[17]  This statement is supported by findings of the Defense Science Board Task Force on Strategic Communication.  Of the seven recommendations presented by this task force to transform SC, only two are specific to DOD.  Indeed, the first three recommendations are; to provide much needed Presidential guidance; develop an SC structure within the NSC with representation from key governmental departments and agencies, and with increased directive authority, and to create a "Center for Strategic Communication to support the NSC and the departments and organizations represented on its Strategic Communication Committee."[18]

The QDR implicitly and properly ties effective DOD support to SC to an equally effective interagency process.  The QDR does not specify how the SC linkage between the interagency and DOD is to be made, but it does recognize the need to transform from a single departmental approach on strategic issues to an interagency approach, and offers several recommendations

to strengthen the process.  Further, DOD understands that although the lead agency for USG SC is the Department of State, the same integrated approach to communication activities is necessary within the department to effectively support SC, and DOD communication capabilities must be properly organized, and resourced to ensure adequate support to SC efforts.  The QDR specifies two key tasks to achieve these aims:  1. Ensure DOD activities, plans and policies accurately reflect overall USG strategic objectives; 2. Focus on properly organizing, training, equipping and resourcing the key communication capabilities.[19]

To achieve the first task, the QDR calls for integrating communications assessments and processes horizontally throughout the department[20], thus providing commanders, planners and operators with increased understanding of the information environment, and DOD communication capabilities at their disposal.  Horizontal integration means eliminating stovepipes and reducing unnecessary overhead; providing functional experts to key staffs and planning groups.  It calls for continuous and greater cooperation and collaboration between supporting communication capability functional experts and operators within matrix organizations, not merely functional ones.  This will yield greater integration of key communication capabilities into plans and operations because of increased familiarity, on the part of commanders, planners, and operators, with the effects that can be achieved by their employment.

The second key SC task specified in the QDR is to focus on properly organizing, training, equipping and resourcing the key communication capabilities.  The QDR specifies the DOD primary supporting capabilities to SC as Public Affairs, Defense Support to Public Diplomacy (DSPD), Military Diplomacy (MD) and Information Operations (IO), including Psychological Operations.  Of these only Public Affairs (PA) and Psychological Operations (PSYOP) are actually military capabilities in the sense that they have a force structure, technical sophistication, sustainability, and the ability to provide the requested capability to Combatant Commanders.[21]  IO, DSPD and MD are activities conducted by DOD to achieve specific information effects.

One could argue, therefore, that the QDR focus is on PA and PSYOP.  While this argument is enticing to proponents of those two capabilities the task must be considered more fully.  The information operating environment continues to evolve; synchronization of a wide range of military capabilities and activities is necessary to achieve information effects.  Therefore, there are three implied tasks that can be drawn from the QDR guidance.  First, PA and PSYOP, as DOD communication capabilities, must be properly organized, trained and equipped.  Second, doctrine and authorities for the application of capabilities and activities to

achieve information effects must be reviewed and refined.  Finally, resources must be devoted to training commanders, operators and planners on the information environment, its relevance to operations and the capabilities and activities that may be employed to achieve informational effects.

The three overarching objectives of the SC Roadmap directly address these issues, and are listed below:

- Objective 1:  Institutionalize a Strategic Communication process in DOD
- Objective 2:  Define roles, responsibilities and relationships, and develop doctrine
- Objective 3:  Properly resource, organize, train and equip[22]

Objectives 2 and 3 align quite well with the vision as presented in the QDR.  Objective 1 however is problematic in that, it creates a Strategic Communication Integration Group (SCIG) supported by an SC Secretariat that is specifically responsible for coordination across DOD and with the interagency on issues and policies with significant communication implications.  Though the SCIG offers the appropriate level of rank to assure representation at the highest levels of the interagency it actually serves to further frustrate the effective integration of DOD supporting communication capabilities internal to DOD, by creating a redundant integration mechanism, and an additional vertical layer of organization.

Is There a Need For a SCIG?

Integrating "communications efforts horizontally across the enterprise", as stated in the 2006 QDR, is the goal.   This is a requirement for greater integration that has been translated into an additional organization; an organization that seeks to further isolate DOD communication activities from traditional departmental processes in order to facilitate integration; hence the flaw.  The process, structure and responsibilities already exist for integration within the department, so why reinvent the wheel?

The reason for the development of this particular solution to the problem of integration is embedded within the very culture of DOD, and highlights another fundamental flaw in the development of SC policy.  A "culture reflects what the firm has learned across time through its responses to the continuous challenges of survival and growth"[23]  The U.S. military traditionally creates working groups and functional teams to analyze and gain greater understanding of particular problems.  Normally this is done because a problem is complex, or because it is an emergent problem and responses or reactions are not well understood, and have not been institutionalized.  Strategic Communication is an excellent example of such a problem.  Not only is SC complex, but it is poorly understood.  Further, only within the last decade or so, have

military leaders begun to appreciate the importance of the information environment, and its affect on the conduct of military operations. This appreciation, unaccompanied by an increase in institutional and leader understanding about how to use existing capabilities to effectively shape the information environment has created a gap. In order to fill this gap, the QDR's SC working group has followed this cultural norm, and created a new organization. The SCIG has been established, along with an SC Secretariat to coordinate across DOD, develop policy guidance, provide guidance to Combatant Commanders, to de-conflict SC decisions arising out of the interagency, and incorporate SC processes into policy development, doctrine, strategy, planning and operations.[24] The Joint Operations Planning and Execution System has been updated with SC guidance, even before the development and promulgation of SC policy. The goal of these activities is to place the institutionalization of the "process" on a fast track.

But the roles and responsibilities are unclear. The SCIG is not an authoritative DOD policy-making body, nor is it an organization that is integrated into Joint Staff planning processes. The creation of the SCIG provides an overarching DOD focal point for SC integration with other USG agencies, but threatens to interfere with, and even replace existing staffing processes and procedures. For example, while SC policies and processes are being developed and pushed by the SCWG, policies for IO and PSYOP are slow-rolled through the staffing process. Indeed, the current approved DOD Directive for Psychological Operations is over 20 years old, and its update remains in limbo in OSD staffing.

At first glance, the vast array of activities identified in the QDR as primary supporting capabilities to SC appear to warrant additional controls, but as indicated above, only Public Affairs and PSYOP are separate and distinct capabilities represented by forces and doctrine specifically established to conduct their functions. Both of these capabilities are doctrinally integrated into planning. In fact, the responsibility for their integration, coordination, and de-confliction across DOD rests with the Joint Staff. While the SCIG may serve an integrating function at the policy level, with other entities of the interagency, any coordinating responsibility within DOD parallels existing responsibilities already inherent to the IO/J39 architecture that already exists. Further, as singular communication capabilities that provide support to SC, both Public Affairs and PSYOP are already integrated into the military organization, so why the need for another guiding entity? Creation of a separate "stovepipe" provides motivation to operators to leave the integration of the communication capabilities in the hands of the so called "experts" allowing them to continue to focus on their own areas of expertise such as integration of kinetic solutions. Effective integration is dependent upon greater understanding of available capabilities by those charged to employ them. Today's operating environment demands that

warfighters are as comfortable employing non-kinetic capabilities as they are kinetic.  In order to achieve this the layers between them and their capability specialists should be reduced rather than expanded.

As a mechanism for improved integration with interagency SC processes, the SCIG offers some promise.   This promise however is lost as leadership of the SCIG is divided between the Under Secretary of Defense for Policy (USD (P)), the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Public Affairs (ASD (PA)) and the Director of the Joint Staff (DJS).  The SC Roadmap fails to identify a single definitive lead for DOD support to SC, thus additional organization must be established to support this new executive body.  Indeed, the new organization, called the Strategic Communication Secretariat, adds yet another vertical layer of SC architecture as it seeks to integrate communication efforts horizontally.  The DSB Task Force on SC recommends that the focal point for DOD support to SC should be the Under Secretary of Defense for Policy (USD(P)), and further recommends the reorganization of the OSD policy directorate to provide a focal point for all DOD support to SC.  Such a designation is consistent with the USD(P) role as the lead for interagency coordination as dictated by DOD regulation, and more accurately reflects the QDR vision by restructuring existing architecture to enhance horizontal and vertical integration.

Developing an SC Culture

"Unity of effort ultimately entails the type of professional military education and leader development that leads to effective diplomacy, as well as to military competence."[25]  The entire concept of effective USG SC is predicated upon unity of effort.  In the few short paragraphs devoted to SC in the 2006 QDR the goal of "achieving a seamless communication across the U.S. Government" is plainly articulated.  It has been an ongoing struggle within the interagency, and also within DOD, to define the organization and structure necessary to achieve this unity.  However, despite any formalized organization or structure the entire effort is doomed to failure unless a culture is first developed across the enterprise that inherently considers the information environment, and is comfortable leveraging capabilities to shape it.

Such a culture is not easily developed.  Only recently have military commanders begun to accept that understanding and affecting the information environment is an operational necessity.  In a recent article on Information Operations, COL Ralph Baker, an Operation Iraqi Freedom Brigade Combat Team Commander noted:

> I admit that while I was preparing to serve in Iraq as a brigade commander, I was among the skeptics who doubted the value of integrating information operations (IO) into my concept of operations.  Most of my officers on my combat team

shared my doubts about the relative importance of information operations. Of course, in current army literature there is a great deal of discussion about IO theory. There is significantly less practical information, however, that details how theory can be effectively translated into practice by tactical units.[26]

Unfortunately, this type of skepticism is the norm. Employing capabilities to affect the information environment is not a new concept, but it has taken on an increased level of importance to commanders at all levels as the military engages in more and more counter-insurgency and stability type operations. In these types of operations, where the supportive will and cooperation of the people within the operating environment has become essential to success, commanders have been unable to effectively employ the kinetic capabilities for which they have been trained. Though perplexing to many, commanders like COL Baker are slowly gaining a greater appreciation for the power of information. He states, "We were probably a good 3 to 4 months into our tour before we gained the requisite experience and understanding of key IO factors. We then began to deliberately develop a structure and mechanism to systematically synchronize our information operations throughout the brigade."[27] COL Baker realized the futility of seeking solutions through purely kinetic means, and actively developed a structure to apply his capabilities, in a non-kinetic way, to achieve his objectives.

Two interesting points can be drawn from COL Baker's article. First, prior to being in a live combat environment, he was skeptical. Understanding and appreciation of information and its effect on operations can only be partially developed in training. The nuances of communication and the collateral effects of words and deeds in cultures other than our own cannot be adequately replicated in training simply because information effects are typically cumulative and require extended periods of time to achieve. Warfighters seek instant gratification. They appreciate the immediate effect that an air-strike has, but with communication the target must be persuaded, over time. Thus, in training commanders and staffs can apply Tactics, Techniques and Procedures others have used, in order to gain familiarity with the mechanics of employing various capabilities, but only in a live environment can they truly see whether they have achieved the effects they have deliberately sought. Necessity in a live environment drove COL Baker to embrace Information Operations. His successful application of capabilities to achieve results in his battle-space converted him into an advocate of IO.

Second, only after 3 to 4 months in the operating environment did COL Baker establish the organization or structure he needed to effectively employ his IO capabilities. The structure and methods for employing them exists, however, in doctrine. Prior to his gaining an understanding of the "IO factors", he chose not to implement the IO structure within his

organization.   There are certainly many reasons for this, not the least of which is the lack of qualified IO specialists on his staff.  The most likely contributing factor, however, was his skepticism and lack of understanding.  That which we do not understand is rarely effectively integrated.  The structure he created, and which doctrine advocates was not additive to his organization, but was, rather, a realignment of existing staff elements to achieve greater functional effectiveness.  His new IO structure was embedded within his S-3 element, and therefore, fully integrated into his operations.

If the QDR calls for integration of communication efforts across the organization, the lack of understanding, among key leaders must be addressed.  Few leaders have had the experiences of COL Baker.  Fewer still, have staffs trained in the integration of communication capabilities.  These are shortcomings the SC Roadmap seeks to address by establishing Joint Strategic Communication curricula for Joint Professional Military Education (JPME), and by reviewing PA and IO billet authorizations at all Combatant Commands.  The Army has taken an additional step of establishing additional IO capability specialists on staffs all the way down to the Brigade Combat Team level in order to ensure integration of information capabilities.

Developing a culture within DOD and throughout the services that fully considers the information environment and how to employ capabilities to shape it will take training, education and experience.  More importantly, commanders at all levels must provide emphasis to overcome cultural obstacles to effective employment of non-traditional capabilities.  COL Baker inherently understood this stating:  "My …IO observation is that for all types of military operations the commander's vision and intent are essential, but when directing subordinate commanders to perform outside of their comfort zones, personal involvement is especially necessary to ensure that the commander's concept is executed according to the plan,"[28] Effective integration of communication efforts will only take place when the relative importance and understanding of the doctrine is achieved.  As commanders and operators who have successfully employed communication capabilities rise through the ranks, the culture will naturally develop, but the continuous integration of these capabilities in all plans and operations must continue in order to sustain it.

Supporting the Commander

> We are not consistently achieving synergy and mass in our strategic communications… The collective belief is that we lack the necessary skills, resources and guidance to synchronize IO in order to achieve tangible effects on the battlefield.[29]

LTG Metz's observation very succinctly highlights the requirements for meeting the vision of strategic communication identified in the QDR. It is the commander's responsibility to exercise effective strategic control within their organizations. He is supported at all levels, including the policy level, by staff elements traditionally charged with developing plans and policies that reflect his guidance and intent. However, if guidance from his higher is absent (read: lack of SC strategy), and necessary resources and expertise for the effective employment of communication capabilities does not reside within his own organization (read: lack of required billets and force structure), he must rely on his own experience level and that of his staff to effectively divine the intent of his higher command, and integrate all available capabilities into his operations. This is no way to run a military operation, and while commanders such as COL Baker are clearly up to the challenge, a better alternative must be provided to provide the commander with the guidance and support he requires.

According to Ireland and Hitt "top managers must acquire deep understandings of the competitive conditions and dynamics of each of the units or divisions for which they are responsible."[30] The information environment is certainly a new and challenging competitive environment that commanders must understand. Accordingly, commanders and their staffs must be as comfortable with the employment of non-kinetic capabilities as they are with traditional kinetic ones. The Roadmap identifies ways to provide commanders, and other government agencies, with assessment tools to better visualize, and understand the information environment, and provide them with more tangible measures of the effectiveness of their efforts in trying to shape it. The Roadmap also requires a review of existing communication capabilities within DOD (PA, PSYOP, IO and Visual Information) to determine whether their current size, structure, training, doctrine and leadership are adequate to meet the needs of Combatant Commanders. Providing commanders with improved assessment capability, and adequately resourcing their communication capability requirements will result in better decision support and access to greater expertise as they seek to achieve effects within the information domain.

Institutionalization of an effective SC culture implies that commanders and staffs at all levels understand the importance of maintaining favorable conditions within the information environment, and the capabilities available to them to do so. To accomplish this, traditional planning and integration processes must be reinforced with necessary capability expertise. Building a parallel DOD SC process and architecture does not accomplish this. Traditional communication capabilities such as Public Affairs and Psychological Operations have well developed doctrine and significant organizational structure that enables them to contribute, but

both are significantly under resourced in several key areas.  Non-kinetic capabilities and programs are traditionally under funded.  The DSB in their 2004 report indicated that "funding for public diplomacy programs and military exchanges should be tripled."[31]  It is counter-intuitive to develop new SC structure within DOD, while existing capabilities, available to commanders compete for limited resources, and do without.  Supporting the commander means providing proper guidance, resources and expertise to enable him to effectively operate.  The absence of these three requirements, as is the case relative to DOD primary supporting capabilities to SC, dictates a correction of these inadequacies before relieving the commander of the responsibility for the mission.  The QDR articulates this requirement, and the Roadmap assigns tasks aimed toward correcting the identified capability gaps.[32]

Conclusion

In today's information environment every word, action, or event has potential strategic impact.  USG policies and actions carry significantly more weight than the words we choose to convey them, and in fact, the nature of the information environment is such that we may have very little control over the words, images or manner in which our actions are conveyed to target audiences across the globe.  Recognizing this, the DOD directed, through the QDR, the integration of communication assessments and processes into its culture, as well as a renewed focus on properly resourcing its key communication capabilities.  The SC Roadmap effectively provides implementing guidance to ensure that these objectives, identified in the QDR, are achieved.  But the Roadmap reaches further, and directs the development of an SC architecture within DOD.  This third objective of the SC Roadmap represents a flawed understanding of SC, and threatens to supplant existing authorities.   It is necessary, therefore, rather than creating an entirely new approach to supporting SC, or reorganizing traditional communication capabilities under a moniker, to remove those factors that limit integration of existing capabilities into the overall plan. LTG Metz was again on point when he stated: "The successful massing of information effects requires *the commander* to clearly articulate his intent for the integration of all the available elements of operations in the information domain into the battle plan"[33]  From an SC standpoint, the absence of a national SC strategy represents a gaping hole in commander's intent.  The commander remains responsible however, for integration of all available capabilities into his plan of operations.   The Commander does not conduct SC, he conducts military operations, but with a keen understanding of the information environment and adequate level of capability and expertise available to him he is able to make decisions and conduct operations in a manner that enables him to achieve specific effects within the

information domain that, in turn, support USG strategic objectives.  In today's information rich strategic environment the main effort must be on adequately resourcing those processes and capabilities that currently exist so that they are able to meet the needs of the war fighter, while preparing future leaders to use all capabilities to compete in the information environment.

Endnotes

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