

## 6-March-17 – Using Cyber Ops as a Tool to Trigger Social Unrest

### Description



### What Is PSYOPS?

The US has recognized that the emergence of new technologies that impact large masses of people must be adapted to military use, working through its covert CIA operations and the Pentagon's Special Forces Command. This has enlarged the scope of military confrontation to include other, unconventional domains (information, psychology, etc.), leading to new methods specific to these environments and the creation of unconventional weapons. Russia took inspiration from the Americans' set-up and their experience in creating a new PSYOPS division of its own.

Conventional warfare aims to inflict physical destruction and physical injuries that can be treated, injuries from which one might recover. But in the 21st century, military campaigns have moved beyond the phase where soldiers were killing each other, dragging along with them through the battlefield millions of conventional projectiles. With information operations, PSYOPS is not intended to inflict physical destruction on the opponent, but to influence and control his thoughts. The damage caused by PSYOPS is gauged by changes at the cognitive, mental level.

Furthermore, information attacks target not so much individuals but as wide a geographical zone as possible. PSYOPS are used to create the most favorable conditions for achieving the objectives of the military operation that they precede. Therefore PSYOPS are most often launched not only during a military conflict but during peacetime, and sometimes they can lead to war. The most elaborate information attacks are second generation operations that monitor over time the information infrastructure of the target state, seeking the right time to destabilize and obstruct it. Even if the target state applies psychological safeguards, they are not effective enough to counteract PSYOPS attacks.

## Information – The Raw Material of PSYOPS

On the territory of another state that is often hostile, the PSYOPS warrior takes an enormous risk using unconventional weapons meant to induce specific moods and emotions. The purpose of psychological operations is to induce or to steer the attitudes and behavior of the target population in a favorable direction, according to the objectives of the one conducting the PSYOPS.

Thus, information is one of the key elements in achieving the goals of PSYOPS missions, information which can be obtained either from special State organizations or through their own efforts. Tactical PSYOPS teams in the field study both the region and the target population, while collecting intelligence. The information gathered is then used in tailoring audio, video, radio, and Internet products designed to shape opinions, attitudes or behavior among the target population.

The PSYOPS algorithm begins with information gathering, storing and processing. Next, based on what that information shows, comes the design and creation of media output (pieces for print, audio, video, and especially the Internet). Finally, these products are disseminated to the target through a media network (radio, TV, newspapers) working undercover in the target territory, or via news portals, personal pages and blogs from fake NGOs promoting “freedom of expression,” which are composed of locals who collaborate with the PSYOPS teams.

PSYOPS works on the mindset, the attitudes of the target population, and specialists receive indirect confirmation if their actions have achieved their goal. Sometimes the results are tested and the methods may be adapted based on results of the analysis.

This complex process of planning, design and implementation of psychological operations is similar to the processes undertaken in preparing a military operation. Military PSYOPS specialists don't shoot guns, but they are good sociologists, psychologists, ethnologists or economists. To these qualities are added an understanding of culture, religion and history. It takes 3–4 years to train a PSYOPS specialist.

One of the basic conditions for carrying out a PSYOPS operation the ability to work closely with public relations organizations, social media, and state or private media, and the communication officers of political parties in the theater of action, where collaborators are recruited. It is very helpful if one can receive information from these sources, because it gives PSYOPS specialists the opportunity to check different types of data they are working with. Such collaboration between workers in PSYOPS, public relations (overt or covert) and the intelligence community is a new concept called Info Ops. NATO specialists think that electronic warfare specialists, specialists in Civ-Mil (civil-military relations), PSYOPS specialists, experts in intelligence and other fields, can all participate in Info Ops.

## PSYOPS as a Tool To Trigger Social Unrest

### Example #1, Romania

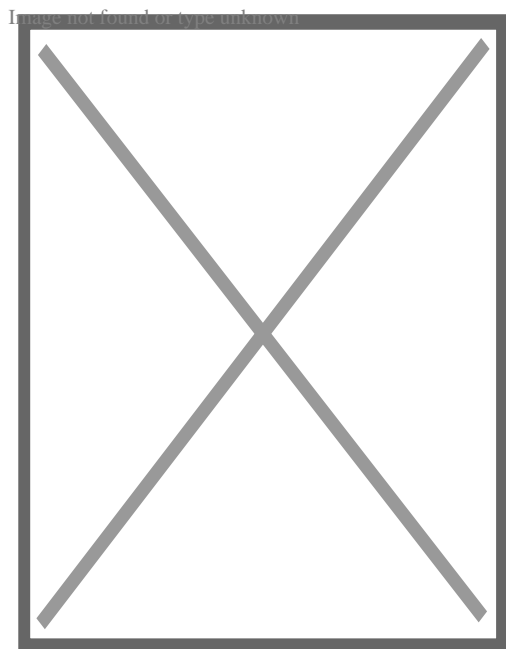
In Romania, a member state located on the eastern border of NATO, the Pentagon has created the alliance's strongest PSYOPS structure. This unit is a copy of those operating under the Pentagon and it was put together with the help of US PSYOPS instructors. The Special Operations Command (SOC)

of the Land Forces of the Romanian army has a full range of units capable of performing any type of unconventional mission within Romania and even more so abroad.

The Psychological Action Directorate (PSYOPS) is the most important element subordinate to the SOC and it works closely with the Operations Directorate of the General Staff. It includes the "Targets Analysis and Evaluation Service," the "Service for Planning and Conducting Psychological Operations," and the "Service for Psychological Influence on the Enemy." In addition, a Psychological Operations Center has been created, and it's staffed with top sociology professors, psychology researchers, experienced directors from Romanian Television, American PSYOPS instructors, etc. The work of this PSYOPS institution is governed by the Doctrine for Psychological Operations and the Psychological Operations Manual.

Internationally, Romanian military psychological operations groups have worked in various theaters of operations, under supervision by their counterparts in the Pentagon. In Afghanistan, Romanian soldiers who were serving as occupation troops printed and circulated a magazine for locals, titled "Sada e azapi" ("Voice of Liberty"). It has a circulation of 400,000 copies and carries articles in three languages: English, Pashto and Dari. There is also a radio station by the same name that broadcasts round the clock.

In Kosovo, Romanian soldiers operate the KFOR radio station, with Serbian and Albanian language broadcasts. Radio KFOR is the prime source of information for Serbs and is ranked second in listenership for Albanians. The Romanian military also publishes the magazine "4U Magazine" with a circulation of 70,000. The journal is published in Albanian, Serbian and English. Some schools use it as teaching material for English classes. In Bosnia-Herzegovina, the most famous publication was a magazine for teens, "Mirko," edited by Romanian servicemen (until 2004, when it ceased publication).



The ever diminishing costs of microchips has made possible record leaps in information technology, especially in applications such as cable television, and mobile and internet networks. One of the consequences of this type of technology was that it allowed the instant creation and organization of many virtual groups, bringing together people who have the same hobby or interest, even if they are

located far apart.

This phenomenon has grown in Western countries, where it is called “Smart Mobs.” Working from that basis, some groups have gone on to create Flash Mobs, in which a bunch of people gather at a precise moment in a public place where they do something unusual, for a brief time, then quickly disperse.

The Internet-based networks of Twitter and Facebook are public channels for data transmission, nothing more and nothing less. To the extent that Twitter and Facebook are used to produce a desired effect, they are already part of the professionals PSYOPS toolkit, building on the successes of dedicated military outlets — with the difference that, in the military, one has to take account of the possibility of jamming, or worse, of “deceiving.” That’s not a problem with Twitter and Facebook.

Informed sources say that the protests that have been disrupting Romania for the last two weeks (late January, early February 2017) may have been created by domestic PSYOPS groups. They were organized through social networks and by contagion, and pulled together more than 600,000 Romanians in ten major cities.

In PSYOPS planning and execution, one key element taken from the military stands out, and that is the hierarchical management structure. To control how the operation unfolds on the street, the leaders have pre-arranged systems for giving orders (in accordance with whatever the behind-the-scenes organizer has in mind). Information also flows back up to the organizers, reporting on the dynamic situation on the ground (battlefield reports) to enable an assessment of any random variables that may have popped up.

Based on this information, spontaneous decisions are made as necessary to adjust the original plan in order to achieve the aims and objectives for which the operation was triggered. All these basic elements of armed conflict have been transferred and adapted to the newest type of confrontation, that which concerns people’s minds, psychological warfare.

Anybody who has thoroughly reviewed the posts circulated on Twitter and Facebook will have discovered what are called PSYOPS “nodes,” that is, the “General Staff” or major players behind the operation. They are trained in crowd control procedures, in formulating psychological messages that trigger people to take action, meant to create contagion among diverse individuals. Any PSYOPS specialists could tell at what time and location each stage of the protests took place; they could instantaneously collect and process photos of the situation on the ground, etc. So the “General Staffs” were easily pinpointed by those in the know, which is why most Romanian and foreign media outlets have done everything possible to provide confused coverage, turning the details of the PSYOPS upside down, willfully mis-interpreting it for the purpose of camouflaging its sponsors. But teams from CNN, Al Jazeera, Russia Today, CCTV-News (China Television) and BBC News all managed to broadcast live images of the protests.

The participants in these protests in Romania, which burst forth for no clear and justified reason, were mostly well-to-do people, in a country where at least a quarter of the population is poor. The rich demonstrated peacefully, projecting laser beams slogans on buildings, in a carnival atmosphere, in stark contrast to a real protest where people are forced to take to the streets and turn violent because they cannot meet their basic needs (food, clothing, etc.).

So, unlike the “Arab springs,” the protests in Romania have been planned so that there is no international interference, they don't get out of control, and in the end they do not lead to any closure. This is most likely because the protests were controlled from start to finish by Romanian PSYOPS structures and were intended only to test the ability to influence the masses and to improve the image of Romanian President Klaus Iohannis, especially outside Romania. Iohannis, of German origin, is the supreme commander of Romania's army and intelligence services, and head of the Supreme Council of National Defense.

## **Example #2, Moldova**

### **PSYOPS operation in Chisinau in 2009**

A coup was staged in Chisinau, capital of Moldova, on April 7, 2009. This resulted in the collapse of the government, early elections, and installation a pro-Western government. The coup followed the pattern used in the hottest parts of the world. In addition to PSYOPS, violence was used in Chisinau, methods that have been tested in real urban guerilla warfare, since the foreign organizers of the coup — and the domestic operators who conducted it — needed casualties, at any cost, to give the coup legitimacy by showing that the forces of law and order had used their weapons. Limiting the effects of the coup, which could have been turned into a civil war like in Ukraine, Moldovan President Vladimir Voronin avoided falling into the trap of ordering the use of arms to violently suppress the demonstrators.

Throughout the day of 7 April 2009 and thereafter, all the television stations in Romania, Moldova's close neighbor, referred to a “revolution.” They communicated false information alleging there were hundreds of dead, and said that Voronin had fled the country. The same Romanian media used identical procedures to manipulate and poison international public opinion that had been successfully tested the coup in Romania in 1989.

The operation to break through the defensive shield before the entrance to the Parliament of Moldova followed a classic Special Operations Forces structure. Those who planned the events of 7 April 2009 knew (well in advance, and in detail) the methods and procedures described in the regulations that guided the security forces on duty. Most likely, they had done considerable reconnoitering beforehand, on the basis of which they could:

- Figure out the traffic flow and send in small groups at regular intervals to infiltrate the body of peaceful demonstrators without raising any alarms;
- Decide precisely where all the tactical groups should gather and which way they should go when the time came to launch the offensive;
- Establish the exact composition of each tactical group, with a clear mission, and signs and signals for recognizing their supporters among the local population.

Alpha group, which is small in number, can be characterized as exceptionally well-trained in using procedures for generating emotional contagion among the mass of demonstrators. In the first phase, its role was to take control of the crowd's emotions, using slogans, in fact hallmarks of psychological warfare, aimed at swaying the participants (and onlookers) in favor of the protest action. The success

of this first phase was just copy/pasted in 2017 in Romania. Psychologically, it transformed the individual participants into a flock willing to blindly follow any promptings without passing them through the filter of reason.

Once the original objective was achieved, Alpha Group initiated the second phase, which consisted of making a big show of a frontal assault. This was in order to compel the police commander to concentrate the security forces and group them in front of the staircase at the entrance and up the steps. To execute the orderly maneuver, and considering the lay of the land, the security forces, who had not noticed the trap laid for them, were forced to move and take up forward positions.

## **PSYOPS Hands Off the Initiative to the Special Operations Forces**

The second and most important sequence of the operation was executed simultaneously by Bravo and Charlie groups, made up of veterans in urban guerrilla warfare, which included in their ranks some Serbs who had participated in organizing Otpor. Bravo and Charlie initiated an extremely quick and well-coordinated maneuver to surround both flanks of the new formation of the security forces. This lightning-fast move broke up the first security group, separating it into small groups that were easily attacked from all sides. This also made it impossible for the security forces to counter-attack, and this meant they would have to bring in their reserves.

Two elements combined to make this sequence a success. First, there were fewer security men on the wings, since they had concentrated their forces to counter the frontal attack by Alpha Group. The second was that 50–70 meters away, two more pressure groups had been positioned. Delta and Echo Group were infiltrated deep into the mass of demonstrators and forcibly pushed peaceful protesters from the center. By this means they got the main body of the protesters moving in the direction of Bravo and Charlie Groups.

Having arrived at this point, according to the regulations in force, the defense of the site was considered compromised and had to be abandoned. First, the building had to be evacuated. As a last resort, in exceptional circumstances and only after the building was evacuated, they could use active methods for crowd dispersal to break up the demonstrators — in other words, “irritants” (commonly known as tear gas) or firearms. As for the first option, the commander of the defense unit had no tear gas launchers or gas masks to protect the troops; and in addition, it would have affected the health of a section of the population in downtown Chisinau that were not participating in the demonstration.



As for the second option, the decision to use weapons against demonstrators was the exclusive prerogative of the President of Moldova, Vladimir Voronin, and he refused to open fire. A good decision, considering that on December 17, 1989, in Romania, President Nicolae Ceausescu's decision to open fire in Timisoara gave the Romanian Special Operations Forces a chance to use electronic simulators to make people believe there was an external enemy. On the heels of the same decision, weapons were given to the Patriotic Guards (a paramilitary formation) and panic-inducing rumors of "terrorists" were spread. But after the Ceausescus were physically eliminated by summary execution, there were no bodies to show for the 65,000+ victims said to be the result of their repression, so the authors of the coup ordered a few dozen corpses of children and women to be exhumed from cemeteries in Timisoara and other cities — to put them on display as great martyrs of the revolution, for the benefit of public opinion and the Western media.

During the counter-demonstration in front of the Central Committee building, ordered by Ceausescu on December 21, 1989, prior to the coup in Romania, Romanian troops specializing in psychological warfare managed to break up the rally by inducing agitation and panic in the crowd. They used high-power speakers and amplifiers. The sound was provided by the army, with 10 vehicles arranged so they were not visible to the crowd but at an angle that sent echoes through the square. Armored personnel carriers and army trucks equipped with PSYOPS apparatus issued a low frequency noise that was perceived as a strong vibration. The PSYOPS formation was called the "Technical Support for Special Propaganda."

Those who watched reports broadcast from the scene in Moldova on 7 April 2009, by journalists from Romanian and Moldovan TV stations as well, supporters of the opposition, noted that the camera angle and position of the operators were almost all aligned the same way. And that they could not have arranged themselves this way spontaneously, as they had no way of knowing what was coming.

## Special Operations Forces (SOF), An Extension of PSYOPS

The UN Commission reports on atrocities in San Salvador, Chile, Panama, Grenada and other countries all confirm that in 1975–1990, Latin America was devastated by rebels, some of whom had specialized in terrorism at the US special operations training center at Fort Benning (State of Georgia). The concept of special operations troops was invented to fill the need to perform tasks considered unconventional by the US military. After the experience in Vietnam, the US military created a Special Operations Command in addition to the four traditional categories of armed forces. Known as “Green Berets,” the soldiers from that command are assigned to five Special Operations Groups, one assigned each continental command (USEUCOM-Europe, USCENTCOM-Asia, USAFRICOM-Africa, USPACOM-Pacific, USSOUTHCOM-South America), each operating within a well-defined geographical area of the world.

Each group is composed of three battalions called ODCs (Operational Detachments-C), and each battalion has four companies called ODBs (Operational Detachments-B). Each company is intended to serve in one particular country (for example, in 1975-1995, ODB 14/65 was responsible for Romania). Members of subunits of each group know the languages spoken and are trained to be familiar with the habits of the peoples in the area of responsibility. Each SOF company is composed of six SOF platoons called ODAs (Operational Detachments-A), with each 12 soldiers. A platoon can act independently as two teams of six soldiers.

In the wars in Vietnam, Iraq and Afghanistan, Green Berets were infiltrated deep into enemy territory to liquidate or capture high-ranking members of the military or civilian leadership. They also destroyed strategic military and civilian targets in enemy territory. The most important mission was recruiting and training, in secret, members of the local population to wage guerrilla actions. In addition to the seven SOF groups, there is the regiment 75 Rangers, which consists of three battalions. They were used in 1989 in the invasion of Panama. They usually infiltrate by parachute.

US SOCOM's most famous unit is Detachment 1 Special Forces, also known as Delta Force. Detachment 1 is made up of four companies with two platoons. Each platoon has four groups of five soldiers that act independently. In terms of respect shown by the US authorities, Delta veterans are in third place, coming right behind Nobel Prize winners and astronauts.

The air component of US SOCOM is made up of helicopters (MH-47G Chinook, MH-6M, and MH-60K/L) and MC-130e/H/W/P jets, which are used to secretly infiltrate commandos and for in-air fueling. For support aircraft, the AC-130H/U is used, armed with three guns (30mm, 40mm and 105mm caliber), Hellfire laser-guided antitank missiles (AGM-114), and 20kg laser-guided bombs.

## PSYOPS and SOF are Used in Coups

The guide “Nonviolent Struggle: 50 Crucial Points,” by Col. Robert Helveya, a Green Beret veteran, formed the basis of all the “revolutions” in the former Soviet space. He describes the methods used by protest professionals to overcome fear and take control of a crowd emotionally. Through George Soros’s foundation Freedom House and the International Republican Institute, funded by the US State Department and USAID (which works closely with the CIA), US special operations troops have created



“activists for political and social reform,” specializing in urban guerrilla warfare, in the former socialist states of Europe.

One example would be the Otpor! movement for civil disobedience and peaceful resistance, founded in 1998 in Belgrade, to overthrow Yugoslav President Slobodan Milosevic. Subsequently, the “Rose Revolution” in Georgia in 2003, the “Orange Revolution” in Ukraine in 2004, the “Tulip Revolution” in Kyrgyzstan in 2005, the one in Moldova in 2009 and the Euromaidan in Kiev in 2014, all benefited from the special services and special operations forces.

Special Operations Forces execute missions that their own state labels anti-terrorist. “Offensive” and “defensive” are two of the five forms of struggle known in military science. Sometimes the situation requires a commander to start by adopting a defensive strategy in order that, shortly, the conditions will be created that allow for a shift to the offensive; as it has often been seen that the counter-terrorist forces of a certain state’s intelligence services planned and carried out a coup on foreign soil. That is, a terrorist operation.