

Physical Attack Information Operations in Bosnia: Counterinformation in a Peace Enforcement Environment

by

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The United States Air Force recently published its Information Operations (IO) doctrine as Air Force Doctrine Document 2-5, Information Operations, on 5 August 1998. The document states that Air Force IO doctrine applies "across the range of military operations from peace to war."¹

The components of Air Force IO are counterinformation (CI) and its two subsets of offensive counterinformation (OCI) and defensive counterinformation (DCI). Counterinformation "seeks to establish a desired degree of control in information functions that permits friendly forces to operate at a given time or place without prohibitive interference by the opposing force [or adversary]."² US Forces apply counterinformation operations to establish information superiority through control of the information realm. Information Superiority is "the degree of dominance that allows friendly forces the ability to collect, control, exploit, and defend information without effective opposition."³ Air Force doctrine recognizes that "CI operations can include support of military operations other than war [MOOTW]," such as peace operations.⁴ Accordingly, Air Force IO doctrine applies to Military Operations Other Than War (MOOTW) such as the NATO-led peace operations in Bosnia-Herzegovina: Operations Joint Endeavor, Joint Guard, and Joint Forge.

Counterinformation comprises both offensive counterinformation and defensive counterinformation IO activities. Offensive Counterinformation "includes actions taken to control the information environment. OCI operations are designed to limit, degrade, disrupt or destroy adversary information capabilities information systems."⁵

The five components of OCI are:

1. Psychological Operations (PSYOP)
2. Electronic Warfare (EW)
3. Military Deception
4. Info Attack
5. Physical Attack

A peace operation information campaign will employ all five of these components to shape the battlespace. Through offensive counterinformation operations, the peace operations force can target such things as adversary leadership, decision making and C², with the goal of controlling adversary decision process tempo, and attack the adversary's centers of gravity through non-lethal means in order to:

- undermine the adversary's legitimacy or actions contrary to the provisions of a peace agreement;

- to reinforce positive behavior in compliance with the peace accord;
- cajole compliance by stressing the responsibilities and actions required of the adversary under the provisions of the peace accord.⁶

In combat operations, the commander accomplishes the mission through the application of lethal combat power in combined arms operations. He uses IO to disrupt or destroy enemy information systems, primarily through EW and physical attack.⁷ Physical attack is the most effective means for denying the enemy use of his C² systems and achieving an information advantage in the application of force.⁸ In peace operations, the principle of restraint and the neutrality of the peace operations force mean that lethal power is rarely the means to mission accomplishment.

In peace operations, the enemy is not one of the warring factions, but the conflict itself. Diplomatic considerations predominate over purely military requirements and impose constraints on the force.⁹ A common characteristic of peace operations has been the necessity to observe the principles of legitimacy and restraint. Although US forces in a Peace Enforcement operation may have to apply lethal combat power during the initial stages, or as the result of acts which violate the terms of the imposed peace, the principles of restraint and legitimacy limit the efficacy of lethal combat power. The principle of restraint requires that forces "apply appropriate military capability prudently," with due regard for collateral damage.¹⁰ In peace operations lethal force is the instrument of last resort. "When force must be used, its purpose is to protect life or compel, not to destroy...the conflict, not the belligerent parties, is the enemy...the use of force should be a last resort and, whenever possible, should be used when other means of persuasion are exhausted"¹¹

Air Force Information Warfare (IW) "is information operations conducted to defend the Air Force's own information and information systems or conducted to attack and effect an adversary's information and information systems."¹² The Air Force term IW "generally includes and subsumes previous Air Force definitions for command and control warfare [C²W]. The primary difference is it is now conceivable to identify, attack, and defeat more than just command and control systems."¹³ In the U.S. Army, the use of the term C²W is comparable to Air Force OCI. Army C²W is comprised of PSYOP, EW, Military Deception, OPSEC, and Physical Destruction.

Of the five elements of OCI listed above, physical attack may seem outside acceptable constructs for use in a peace operation where lethal force is used only as a last resort. The Air Force definition of physical attack is "...the use of 'hard kill' weapons against designated targets. The objective is to affect information or information systems by using a physical weapon. Physical attack disrupts, damages, or destroys an adversary's information system through destructive power."¹⁴ The Army equivalent IO term to physical attack is physical destruction. However, the Army term, physical destruction is a less restrictive term which means "the application of combat power to destroy or neutralize enemy forces and installations."¹⁵ It is primarily in the **neutralization** of adversary C² functions and processes that physical destruction is manifested in peace operations. As a component of OCI, physical attack operations may also be designed to achieve neutralizing effects, as Air Force Counterinformation operations seek to establish information superiority "by neutralizing or influencing adversary information activities."¹⁶ "One can 'target' a [C²] system without designating it for actual destruction," effective Air Force OCI

or Army C²W may aim to defeat the adversary C² system, "whether by physical destruction or effective nullification."¹⁷ The destruction of a target means that the adversary capability is degraded or shut down, either permanently, or for a specified period of time.¹⁸

Although SFOR did not physically destroy any of the FWFs' ability to command and control their elements, IO were aimed at influencing their C² decision-makers. In Operations JOINT ENDEAVOR and JOINT GUARD, C²W also aimed at co-opting the FWFs' C² apparatus to facilitate their compliance with the Dayton Peace Accord and to monitor that compliance as well.¹⁹

FWF C² facilities were targeted for destruction under the concept physical attack during early NATO air operations supporting UNPROFOR in autumn 1995. Known as Operation Deliberate Force, the NATO air operation launched 3,515 sorties against Bosnian Serb military positions.²⁰ This NATO air campaign is credited for having pushed the Bosnian Serbs to the peace table at Dayton Ohio. During the siege of Sarajevo, the combination of attacks by NATO aircraft delivering precision air strikes against Bosnian Serb Army (VRS) positions, and an attack with 13 Tomahawk land attack missiles against VRS C² facilities, disrupted VRS C² systems and achieved the termination of the bombardment of Sarajevo and convinced Serb troops to remove their heavy weapons.²¹

Physical Attack operations in peace operations focus on the **neutralization** of adversary capabilities. In determining whether or not Physical Attack operations apply, the IO planner must identify the adversary's means to effect the situation, and then target those means for neutralization. Tactics employed to neutralize the adversary's ability to effect the situation or exercise command and control include:

- Occupying or controlling access to facilities used by the adversary for C³ and early warning;
- Shutting down power sources for C³ and early warning systems;
- Delaying groups or individuals of the adversary's support base attempting to mass;
- Arresting or detaining key individuals and instigators of the adversary support base to prevent them from fomenting disturbance at "hot spots."

Physical occupation of, or controlling access to adversary C³ and early warning facilities is a means of temporarily denying the adversary use of those capabilities. If the peace operation force cannot occupy the facility or control access to it, cutting off its power may provide a less-intrusive means of temporarily depriving the adversary use of the facility's functions. Examples of C³ and early warning facilities that could possibly be targeted for physical attack include: TV and radio transmitting towers and stations, police stations, air raid sirens, and radio frequencies used to transmit radio or telephone communications.

If the adversary attempts to conduct demonstrations by massing angry crowds, then delaying the movement of adversary supporters through the use of checkpoints and road blocks denies the adversary the ability to mass. Typically, demonstrations carried out in Bosnia by the FWFs involved bussing in crowds of supporters from outlying towns and villages to achieve a mass. The demonstrators sought to dominate the situation by stretching the peace operations force and

forcing them to spread their forces thinly as they attempted to monitor and control the situation. Road blocks need not be formal, and ruses may be used to send the inbound mobs on detour after detour. Crowds need leaders and instigators to be set into action. Detaining key leaders and instigators before the crowd assembles removes the volatile agent from the combustible mix. If the crowd has already assembled, it may be possible to remove instigators and agitators attempting to ignite the crowd into action.

Physical Destruction Operations in Task Force Eagle:

The Seizure of Bosnian-Serb Radio/Television Towers.

Following the civil war in Bosnia, much of the communications media lay in ruins. At the cessation of hostilities newspapers and magazines were few, expensive, and had limited circulation. In such circumstances, broadcast media were extremely influential, despite the small number of operating transmitters. The broadcast media of the FWFs were politically driven and controlled. Reporting was biased by either omission of the truth, distortion through emphasis on only those elements of information which reinforced a political view, or outright disinformation, i.e., fiction-based propaganda. In May 1997, the North Atlantic Council granted authority to SFOR to take actions against any media undermining the peace accords.²²

During the early summer of 1997, a power struggle erupted between the rival factions of the Bosnian Serb (Republika Serpska, or RS) leadership, that is, the RS President Bijlana Plavsic and the Bosnian-Serb member of the Bosnian presidency, Momcilo Krajisnik (loyal to the former RS President and indicted war criminal Radovan Karadzic). The struggle began when Madame-President Plavsic decided to dissolve the RS parliament and called for new elections in November 1997. The struggle caused a split within the RS state television, with journalists and editors from the Banja Luka studio deciding to split away from Pale direction after Pale manipulated a broadcast on SFOR searches in police stations. SFOR and OHR tried to exploit these developments to their advantage. SFOR and OHR encouraged SRT Pale to tone down its anti-Dayton, anti-NATO campaign and air programs on the DPA sponsored by the international community. In exchange for their cooperation, they would remain open, whereas non-compliance would bring military action.²³

The pro-Karadzic, or Pale faction and its politically-controlled media continued the barrage of anti-SFOR propaganda and hate. SRT television stations for example, referred to the Muslim head of Bosnia's Presidency as "Alija Izetbegovic, Muslim murderer."²⁴ These same stations televised anti-SFOR propaganda to the Bosnian Serb audience attacking the legitimacy of SFOR and its mandate. One anti-SFOR propaganda item accused SFOR of using "low-intensity nuclear weapons," during the 1995 attacks on VRS positions around Sarajevo, Gorazde, and Majeвица in 1995.²⁵ In another propaganda piece, Serbian Radio Television (SRT) showed alternating images of WWII German Army and present-day NATO forces while the commentator drew the comparison, likening SFOR soldiers to a Nazi occupation force.²⁶ NATO officials have expressed concerns that such "venomous propaganda" threatens the safety of the NATO-led peace operations force.²⁷

Despite the efforts of both the High Representative and the OSCE, the dissident RS faction repeatedly refused to cease or moderate their broadcasts. After SRT Pale heavily edited a tape on the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY) war crimes mission, using it to spread disinformation, the international community took direct action. Under the authority of the GFAP and orders from the NATO Council and the Office of the High Representative, SFOR seized four SRT transmission towers, considerably reducing the footprint of SRT. The seizure of these towers was a physical destruction mission in that SFOR targeted the TV transmitter towers for neutralization, which is a condition achieved by physical destruction operations. Within TFE, US soldiers secured several transmitters used by media elements loyal to the pro-Karadzic faction. On October 1, 1997, TFE units executed the physical destruction operation, securing the Bosnian-Serb television/radio transmitter complexes on Hill 619 in Duga Njiva, Hill 562 near Ugljevik, Trebevisa (near Sarajevo) and Leotar.²⁸ In pre-dawn raids, SFOR French, Polish, Scandinavian and American soldiers secured the sites and immediately fortified them against anticipated resistance.²⁹

At Hill 619, US Engineers operating Armored Combat Excavators (M-9 ACE) constructed protective berms for the troops, and cleared fields of fire, while other engineers emplaced a triple-standard concertina barrier around the site.³⁰ At Hill 562, 200 Bosnian-Serb protesters staged a 15-hour confrontation in which the protesters hurled rocks and attacked with clubs, damaging several vehicles.³¹



Figure 1, Seizure of SRT Transmitting Tower on Hill 619³²

Targeting Adversary Early Warning Devices for Destruction or Neutralization.

On 27 August 1997, SFOR received indications that Replubika Serpska (RS) police forces were attempting to take control of Police Stations in MND-N. This information followed a change in the status of Special Police units, some of which were equipped with armored cars, anti-tank rockets, anti-tank and anti-personnel mines, and other combat equipment. The change in status meant that these units were to be treated as military units and conform to the military provisions of the Dayton Peace Accord (DPA) under SFOR oversight, unless they were transformed into proper civil police units with a clear law-and-order mission. Special Police units in the RS declined to change their organization and therefore fell under the military provisions of the DPA, which meant that SFOR troops could inspect their facilities, and control their movements and training in accordance with Annex 1A.

In an operation intended to enforce compliance from the entity police forces, SFOR supported the International Police Task Force (IPTF) in an inspection of the Special Police units in Bijlijina, Brcko, and Jajna. As SFOR forces commenced operations early in the morning on 27 August, civil-defense sirens were used to mobilize the populace into action. Hostile crowds quickly massed in Brcko to demonstrate against the IPTF and the supporting SFOR forces.

The operation commenced during darkness at approximately 0200 in order to rapidly establish situational dominance while the populace was unaware. However, although the operation was initiated during the hours of darkness in the early morning hours, hostile crowds quickly gathered to thwart SFOR forces around the targeted facilities. At approximately 0500, two civil-defense sirens sounded in Brcko, alerting the populace to mobilize.³³ These sirens were complemented with radio broadcasts, one of which aired at 0700 urging the "Serb people" to respond to the "call of danger and call to all citizens to assemble in the center of town..."³⁴ One Sergeant on the scene reported "They sounded an air defense siren and people just started bombarding us. We were getting pelted with bricks and blocks."³⁵ During the remainder of the day, SFOR vehicles were damaged in attacks executed with "molotov cocktails," rocks, and bricks - soldiers were assaulted and injured. SFOR had lost the initiative to the hard-line Bosnian Serb faction leaders who orchestrated the demonstrators and who controlled the situation. RS Police refused to control the crowds and they achieved their objective of interfering with the IPTF Police site inspections. SFOR lost situational dominance early in this operation.



Figure 2, Rioters in Brcko assaulting SFOR soldiers 28 August 1997.³⁶

Following the operation, it became clear to the MND-N staff that in future operations, this warning and alert capability would have to be neutralized in order to allow SFOR to maintain the initiative and situational dominance. Neutralizing the civil-defense sirens to hamper the Bosnian Serbs' ability to muster is an example of C² Attack. C² Attack seeks to "gain control over our adversary's C² function....targeting personnel, equipment, communications, and facilities in an effort to disrupt or shape adversary C²."³⁷ Neutralizing adversary C² may be accomplished through electronic warfare, deception, and physical destruction. Neutralization is therefore a physical destruction effect, as the actual destruction of the facility or capability is not required. The definition of physical destruction in IO doctrine includes the neutralization of targets, which may be preserved and denied to the adversary selectively.³⁸ Although the sirens were very "low-tech" C² their effectiveness is irrefutable in light of the crowds that assembled in short order and numbered approximately 1200.³⁹

During peace operations in a MOUT⁴⁰ environment, in which the aim is to establish control over entities or functions of former warring factions, the intelligence preparation of the battlefield (IPB) of adversary C² must address seemingly "low-tech" early warning capabilities such as civil-defense sirens. Such systems must be targeted for C² Attack - Physical Destruction, to either temporarily neutralize the capability or permanently destroy it. Denying the FWFs their early warning capabilities will delay and disrupt any organized response to friendly operations and ensure that friendly forces maintain the initiative and situational dominance.

Physical Attack and Physical Destruction operations are easily understood when applied as one of five elements of Offensive Air Force Counterinformation or Army Command and Control Warfare in combat operations. The emphasis of OCI and C²W during MOOTW shifts away from the warfighting orientation to take in the broader and often political considerations associated with interacting with a variety of actors in the Global Information Environment (GIE).⁴¹ The accepted Joint definition of C²W specifies that C²W is "an application of Information Warfare in military operations."⁴² Information warfare covers the range of actions taken during conflict or crisis to achieve information superiority over an adversary. The "warfare" component of the term information warfare may seem to imply that IW applies only to combat operations. In fact, IW **capabilities** are employed in MOOTW to bring about the desired responses from several audiences to include the political and military leadership of the former warring factions, the populace, and other actors.⁴³ The peace operations force employs its IW capabilities "to preserve the peace, deter escalation of a conflict, and prepare the battlefield so that if a crisis escalated to conflict, the US military can effectively employ [offensive IW] capabilities in a wartime scenario."⁴⁴ Following the principle of restraint, and applying IW capabilities selectively, Air Force Physical Attack and Army Physical Destruction operations remain a viable option in peace operations intended to achieve information and situation dominance.

Endnotes:

1. Headquarters, Air Force Doctrine Center, Information Operations, Air Force Doctrine Document 2-5, (Maxwell AFB: AFDC, 5 August 1998), p. vii.

2. Ibid., p. 40.
3. Ibid., p. 2.
4. Ibid., p. 9.
5. Ibid., p. 9.
6. In US Army Information Operations doctrine, OCI is known as offensive information operations. See Maj. Gen. David L. Grange, USA and Col. James A. Kelley, USA, "Information Operations for the Ground Commander," *Military Review*, Vol. LXXVII, No. 2, March-April 1997, p. 9.
7. Headquarters, US Army Training and Doctrine Command, *Concept for Information Operations*, TRADOC Pamphlet 525-69, (Fort Monroe Va.: TRADOC, 1 August 1995), p. 9.
8. Les Aspin, *Annual Report to the President and the Congress*, (Washington DC, USGPO, January 1994), p. 244.
9. Headquarters, Dept. of the Army, *Decisive Force: The Army in Theater Operations*, Field Manual 100-7, (Washington DC: USGPO, 31 May 1995), p. 8-14
10. Headquarters, Dept. of the Army, *Peace Operations*, Field Manual 100-23, (Washington DC: USGPO, 30 December 1994), p. 17.
11. Ibid., pp. v and 17.
12. Headquarters, Air Force Doctrine Center, *Information Operations*, Air Force Doctrine Document 2-5, op. cit.,
13. Ibid., p. vii.
14. Ibid., p. 14.
15. Headquarters, Dept. of the Army, *Information Operations*, Field Manual 100-6, (Washington DC: USGPO, August 1996), p. 3-5.
16. Headquarters, Air Force Doctrine Center, *Information Operations*, Air Force Doctrine Document 2-5, op. cit., p. 9.
17. Struble, Dan, Lt. Cdr., USNR, "What Is Command and Control Warfare?" *Naval War College Review*, Summer 1995, Vol. XLVIII, No. 3, p. 91.
18. Headquarters, Dept. of the Army, *Information Operations*, FM 100-6, op. cit., p. 3-5.

19. See Center for Army Lessons Learned, Initial Impressions Report, Operation JOINT ENDEAVOR, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Task Force Eagle Initial Impressions, (Unclassified, Distribution Limited), (Fort Leavenworth Kans: CALL, May 1996), p. 61.
20. Larry K. Wentz, ed., Lessons From Bosnia: The IFOR Experience, Command and Control Research Program, National Defense University, (Washington DC: NDU Press, 1998), p. 23.
21. Lawrence E Caspar, Irving L. Halter, Earl W. Powers, Paul J. Selva, Thomas W. Steffens, and T. Lamar Willis, "Knowledge-Based Warfare: A Security Strategy for the Next Century," Joint Forces Quarterly, Autumn 1996, No. 13, p. 85.
22. Associated Press, "NATO Pulls Plug on Serb Telecast," The Kansas City Star, October 19, 1997, p. A14.
23. Pascale Combelles Siegel, Target Bosnia: Integrating Information Activities in Peace Operations, Command and Control Research Program, National Defense University, (Washington DC: NDU Press, 1998), pp. 160 and 161.
24. See Tracy Wilkinson, "Trying to Extract War from Journalism," Los Angeles Times, Sunday, October 26, 1997, p. 12A.
25. See Center for Army Lessons Learned, B/H CAAT Elections, Initial Impressions Report, (Unclassified, Distribution Limited), (Fort Leavenworth Kans: CALL, March 1998), p. 83.
26. Larry K. Wentz, IFOR C⁴ISR Experiences, a report prepared for the National Defense University, Command and Control Research Program, p. 5. See the CCRP Website at <http://www.dodccrp.org/bosnia.htm#REPORTS/BRIEFINGS>
27. Philip Shenon, "U.S. and Allies Plan to Curb Bosnian Propaganda," The New York Times, 24 April 1998.
28. For a more detailed description, see William B. Buchanan, US European Command Support of Operation Joint Guard (21 December 1996 - 20 December 1997), (Unclassified, Distribution Limited), (Alexandria Va.: Institute for Defense Analysis, IDA Paper P-3389, 1998), p. IV-15.
29. Dennis Steele, "Hill 562: Boots in the Mud," Army, Vol. 48, No. 1, January 1998, pp. 39-41.
30. See SGT Jerry Parisellad, "Broadcasts of Violence Stop With SFOR Help," 362 Military Public Affairs Detachment, Task Force Eagle Talon, Vol. 3, No. 40, October 10, 1997, Eagle Base, Tuzla Bosnia.
31. Dennis Steele, op. cit. p. 41.
32. Photo by 55th Combat Camera Company.

33. Press Release, Multi-National Division-North, Coalition Press Information Center, Operation JOINT GUARD, Release No. 0828-3, p. 1.
34. Asst. Chief of Staff, G-2, 1st Infantry Division, Tuzla Night Owl, Vol. 2, Issue 241, August 29, 1997, Eagle Base, Bosnia, p. 1.
35. See Jerry Merideth, "They Got Me Good, GI Relates," The Stars and Stripes, Vol. 56, No. 134, August 29, 1997, pp. 1 and 4.
36. SGT Mark Schulz and PFC Todd Edwards, 372 Mobile Public Affairs Detachment, "Rioters: Soldiers React to Civil Unrest," Talon, Vol. 3, No. 36, 05 September 1998.
37. Headquarters, Dept. of the Army, FM 100-6, Information Operations, op. cit., p. 2-4 emphasis added.
38. Ibid. p. 3-5. Physical destruction is defined as "The application of combat power to destroy or neutralize enemy forces and installations," (emphasis added).
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40. Military Operations on Urbanized Terrain. For information on MOUT, see Field Manual
41. Ibid., p. 4-3.
42. Office of the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Joint Publication 3-13.1, Joint Doctrine for Command and Control Warfare, (Washington DC: USGPO, 7 February 1996), p. v.
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