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The Defense Community: Challenges for Public Information Management

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Paper prepared for presentation at the Conference

Security Sector Reform and the Media

Regional Conference on defence and the freedom of information

Organized by

Geneva Center for the Democratic Control of Armed Forces DCAF
and medienhilfe Switzerland

in cooperation with the Center for Civil-Military Relations CCMR
and the Media Center Belgrade

Serbia & Montenegro, November 14/15, 2003

The Conference for the reform of the defence and security sector and the media is organised in the right moment, thus giving a great contribution towards the strengthening of the democracy in the countries from the region and further.

“Let the people know the facts and the country will be safe”, said Abraham Lincoln, the 16th President of the USA in 1864 regarding the functioning of the democracy.

In order to practice the law, the people should be able to make choices based on independent judgements and good information. This could be achieved only if the citizens have credible data based on facts. They get them through the free media.

The flow of ideas, the possibility to make choices based on valid information, the possibility to criticize, all these assumption on which the democracy is based largely depend upon communications.

It is my greatest pleasure to greet you all and wish you a successful work on this Conference, which would, I am convinced, produce suggestions of the measures for confidence building between the armed forces and the civic society.

Today, the Macedonian defence is in the phase of transformation and approaching towards the modern defence and security systems. The analogy of the need from this transformation presupposes transformation of the previous planning, organizing and functioning of the information into an overall area of public relations, as an integral part of the defence system.

According to the conceptual formulation and the strive for development according to our needs, and the determination for compatibility with such systems in the NATO structures, we perceive the public relations in the defence as an area of an exceptional importance and interest, not only because of the supplying of information for all the activities in the Ministry of the Defence and the Army, but also because they are an important precondition for the quality and engaged participation in the bringing and carrying out of the decisions for all the relevant issues from this segment of social living.

I am convinced that through the exchange of ideas and thoughts at this Conference, the interaction between the armed forces and the media would be raised to a higher level, and would increase the democratic control on the security sector by the entire society through the professional media coverage.

The Ministry of Defence of the Republic of Macedonia has a serious approach towards all the ideas and projects from this Conference, which was last held in Skopje, and I

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hope that together, we would contribute in the strengthening of the democratic environment in the country and the exceptional confidence among the army and the citizens.

In these circumstances, the Ministries of Defence, regarding the public relations activity should provide accurate and timely information of the internal components, the bodies of the state authorities and the public for the proper assessment and understanding of the facts regarding the national security and the defence activities.

* used materials from the book *“Introduction to the Publication and Information Science”* by Michael Kuncik and Astrid Cipfel

The supplying of the media with a continuous influx of information is of a particular importance for avoiding of desinformation, rumors, speculations and the impatience in the public, especially among the families of the members of the armed forces who are engaged in the military operations, as well as because of the increasing of the public attention and understanding of the activities within the framework of the military operations.

The efforts of the Republic of Macedonia to organise the defence system according to our needs for defending of the sovereignty and integrity of the country, but as well compatible to the modern western models and NATO structures, means reconstruction of the present system and transitional process with reorganization of the Ministry of Defence, as well as of the Army structures. In this context, without doubt, the public relations would undergo through some sort of transition regarding their organization, the way of planning, and realization of the informative issues and activities. Therefore, it is good that this area in the defence system mainly has a basic setting, but also has the experiences for further development and adjustment to the modern capabilities and needs.

Especially important for the defence system of the Republic of Macedonia is that in the previous practice, the responsibility for the information in the defence sector, as an obligation and right, was entirely in the hands of the governing and commanding structures, as well as in the public relations bodies. Accordingly, the governing and commanding structures present and interpret the events from their point of responsibility and competence and approve them, which as an activity in the public relations field, would be planned, organized and coordinated by the special

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expert bodies on the appropriate levels within the structures Ministry of Defence and Army – the public relations bodies.

Defining of the specific conditions

The defence subjects plan and realize their activities not only in the everyday, usual circumstances. In fact, the activities in the field of defence, above all, mean preparation for activities in the conditions which considerably differ from the everyday-peacetime. This, on the other hand, necessitates planning and realization of the activities that would push forward the preparations for what is the basic function of the defence subjects – reacting in specific circumstances.

In that sense, the specific circumstances are: participation of the Army in actions of natural disasters, multinational military-civil exercises, maneuvers, increased combat readiness of the Army, mobilization and participation of the Army in the combat defence actions and operations.

The stated specifications significantly change the living and space ambient in which the defence responsibilities are carried out. From this point of view, the activity in the field of the public information acquires new characteristics, which, above all, are characterised by the intensity of the informing, the richness of the contents, and the methods of the realization. In other words, the organising of the public relations and especially the informing of the public are applied as well in the specific circumstances from the activity of the defence subjects, i.e. the armed forces. The following defined provisions only supplement and concretize the activity in the specific and particular circumstances or conditions.

Organization of the public relations in specific conditions

during participation of the Army in actions of natural disasters

In the conditions of natural disasters, according to the law provisions, during the rebuilding of the consequences from them, the defence subjects, i.e. the units or parts of the Army and the Civil Protection at the Ministry of Defence can be engaged independently, or in cooperation with the other civil organizations and institutions.

During the activities of the rebuilding from the consequences from the natural disasters, the public relations activity should be planned, organized and realized by the Press Information Center, whose purpose is to collect the results from the participation in the

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activity of the rebuilding of the consequences, and through the media, to organize informing of the public for the activities and measurements which were realised, and which are being further taken for the protection and rescue of the endangered population and its goods.

during the carrying out of the military exercises

The military exercises and maneuvers, as a special form of training and preparation for carrying out the assignments from the defence field, regardless whether they are of internal (within the framework of the armed forces of the Republic of Macedonia) or multinational character (within the frames of the regional or collective security and defence systems and their programs), are characterised with intense military activity, the actions and operations are conducted on the actual field, they could have partly a confidential nature, and though the protection measures are undertaken, yet there are real possibilities for unwanted and unpredicted incidents. In these conditions, and according to the Annual Program for Public Information, the public relation activity in this case as well should be planned, organised and realised through the Information Center, Press Center, Media center, or some other body, or public relations office.

during the conditions of increased combat readiness and other exceptional circumstances

The Ministry of Defence's policy regarding the public information in the conditions of an increased combat readiness, mobilization, and in the defence combat actions and operations of the armed forces, should start from the basic orientation that in these circumstances as well, the governing and the commanding structures in the Ministry of Defence and the ARM should plan, organise and realise the public relations activity in every aspect of their competence and responsibility.

In the implementation of the principles for information of the Ministry for public relations, the commanders and the other commanding structures should have the right, competence and responsibility to enable the access to the media representatives (civilian, as well as military) to the military operations without highly-confidential nature, taking care for the safety of the members of the armed forces and media representatives. The concern regarding the safety of the media representatives should not be a factor for forbidding their access in the military operations.

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In general, the Ministry of Defence, regarding the public relations activity in these conditions, should provide timely and accurate information for the internal components, bodies of the state authorities and the public for a correct assessment and understanding of the facts for the national security and defence activities. Supplying of the media with a continuous influx of information is of great importance for avoiding the disinformation, rumors, speculations, and the public impatience, especially among the families of the members of the armed forces engaged in the military operations, as well as because of the increasing of the public precaution and understanding of the activities in the framework of the military operations.

General Carl von Clausewitz and the war

The first military historian and theoretician, who after the French revolution established that the war was not only a work for the specialists and professional soldiers, but also for the people, was the Prussian general Carl von Clausewitz. In 1832, one year after his death, his textual fragment "From the war" was published. Clausewitz hold the thesis that Napoleon did not triumphed only because of his military capabilities, but also because of the enthusiasm of the people. With the French revolution the war has suddenly become once more the work of the people. It was a great advantage which his opponents did not have at the beginning of the war. To mobilize the public support was as important as to arm a military for a war. In the center of the war stands the moral, not the physical strength. The victory cannot be achieved by destruction, but by braking the moral of the enemy. According to von Clausewitz, each war theory should bear in mind three factors:

- the government, who establishes the aim of the war;
- the army, who fights for this aim;
- the people, who support it.

Carl von Clausewitz knew what Sir Arthur Ponsonby said later in 1935 that *the propaganda is a weapon, as well as the rifle, but much more successful that it.*

Starting from the Carl von Clausewitz's ideas, we can develop a theoretical fundaments of the measures for censorship, i.e. a control of the reporting from the war, which should take into account the level of the military actions, i.e. surprising the adversary, as well as the "people" factor, i.e. the readiness that they support the war.

The military actions take place in the areas which are characterized with danger, confusion and great physical tension. Clausewitz describes it as "friction". "The friction is responsible whether all the war plans which are formed, i.e. which are confirmed on the table, or during maneuvers,

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are fulfilled.” In war everything is easy, but yet the “easy” is difficult. All these difficulties accumulate and lead to friction, which anybody who has not seen the war could imagine...The friction is the only term that, generally speaking, corresponds to what distinguishes the real war from the war on paper.” In other words, no army would conduct a plan based on surprises if it has the reason to surmise that the adversary knows the plan. Therefore, holding secrets should be valued as an unavoidable necessity during war since – according to Wellington – the adversary wants to know “what is going on the other side of the hill”.

Regarding the quality of the news during war, von Clausewitz wrote: “great part of the news which are received in the war is contradictory, even greater part is wrong, and the greatest part of all is subjected to large uncertainty. In short,” the greatest part of the news is wrong...” Similar summary, based on his researches of the propaganda in the World War I gives Sir Arthur Posonby, the author of the “The lies during war” (1930). *“During war, the disregard to lie is carelessness, the doubt in a lie is offence, and the publishing of the truth is crime”*.

The lie is necessary during war: Paradoxical communication

The need to beguile the adversary in battle, theoretically elaborated by Carl von Clausewitz, has been familiar to the army long time ago. In this manner, Niccolo Machiavelli in “The Principles” stressed the importance of the lie as an instrument of the politics. The craft of pretending and hypocrisy which Machiavelli requires from the dukes is deciding during military actions, because of the principle for surprising the adversary. Georg Simmel, in the fifth part of his book “Sociology” called “The secret and the secret society”, explores this subject. Simmel, (1922) starts from the following basic assumption: “All the relations among the people are based, of course, on the fact that these people know something about each other.” People expect certain behaviour and they know that that one they are facing with has the same expectations as well. The stabile social relations are based on creating stabile expectations from the expectations which enable prognosticating the social behaviour. In other words, during war, it is most important to deceive the expectations of the adversary, and to dig out the foundations of the joint public life as regards the adversary.”

Paul Watzlavik (1976) gives a communicational-theoretic basis to the inevitability to deceive the adversary during war. Communication means transfer of the information from one person to another. During war, the communication with the adversary means an attempt of giving disinformation to the opponent, who on the other hand knows that the other side is trying to misinform him. The procedures for making decisions during war have a character of paradoxical prediction: “The more probable certain action is, there is less possibility that it would be carried out: as it becomes more and more unbelievable, it is actually most probable.” Hence, it is the high art of disinformation which cannot be equaled with the propaganda since the successful

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disinformation means that the adversary should get the impression that the information originates from his side, and therefore it is true.

As an example of disinformation could be used the “Mincemeat” operation carried out in May 1943, during the World War II, when the forces of the Alliance successfully deceived the Germans regarding their plans for landing in the Mediterranean Sea. The Alliance forces succeeded to impute information to the Germans in a convincing way, according to which, on the basis of a logical and obvious manner drawn from the attack in Sicily, the Alliance planned the landing in Greece or Sardinia. The truth was presented as a deceit, thus making the deceit even more probable.

The logic of disinformation, that is, imputing false information for one’s personal plans, gives a possibility for almost endless entanglement in the mutual dependencies, which Watzlav reduces to the basic formula: “What does he think that I think that he thinks....etc?” apart that, here, the final aim comprises of creating wrong conclusions, imputing false truths and worrying that the adversary would not come to reason until it is not too late.” In other words, the rules for normal communication in the context of making efforts for disinformation are turned upside down. It is the world of the “double cross”. Winston Churchill describes it very vividly: “During war, the truth is so precious that it should have a bodyguard created of lies.”

It should be remembered: During war, suppressing of the information (censorship), i.e. the instrumental usage of the mass media is needed for the purpose of not losing the priority of the surprise moment, i.e. the adversary should not be informed of the personal strength, weakness, or intention. The other three additional reasons justify the censorship: the moral of the troupes, the moral of the people, and the world public.

Public opinion during war

Ferdinand Tonnies, in his “The Critic of the Public Opinion” (1922) characterizes the public opinion of a country in war condition, pointing out that the generally acknowledged opinion is that “the war is imposed to the country, that it leads a defensive war, or as the English definition says, it is a justified and inevitable war.” Tonnies writes: “The building of the public opinion in war, quite naturally, is under the auspices of the of the government’s and the military leadership’s concern.” Tonnies states an example from Germany about the manner in which the public was deceived regarding the mode and the dimension of the Marne defeat, during the World War I. The following statement was given to the press: “We are not always able to tell everything, but the things that we will tell you are true.” This principle of informing of the press regarding the military activities was commented by Paul Plaut, (1927).“Hiding and unrevealing of the great withdrawal in September made the report completely untruthful.”

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In order to stabilize the public opinion, the adversary is often labeled as an aggressor, inhumane monster. In this manner, Germany during the World War I by was named by Herbert G. Wells as "Frankenstein's Germany", and Rudyard Kipling warned: "The German is at the door". The President Bush characterized the Gulf War as a war between the good and the evil. An analysis of the contents of the media reports during the Gulf War, conducted by the Craig La May in the USA in 1991, has shown that the Gulf War was presented as "a new form of a crusade of the millennium". Saddam Hussein was presented as a satanic enemy, a ruler of the kingdom of evil. In this context, it should not be forgotten that the American Government, within the frames of its preparations for the attack on Libya, conducted a campaign for disinformation against Gadaffi. The Foreign Secretary George Shultz stated: "Honestly, I have no problems regarding one small psychological battle with Gadaffi".

Naturally, the idea from the reporting from the Gulf War was to influence on the world's opinion. The importance of the international communication, i.e. of the world public for the foreign policy, i.e. for leading the war was first understood by the British. One "Cabinet paper" dated from 19.03.1891 explicitly pointed to the fact that the world control on the worldwide cable network brought a great advantage to Great Britain, i.e. the opportunity to censor the foreign news. Even back in the 1898, "the Colonial Defence Committee" brought a decision for switching off of the enemy's lines in a case of war. Regarding Germany, it was decided that in the case of war, the German line from Emden to Figgo should be switched off, and from there through the Azures up till America, that Germany should be isolated. The switching of this line was one of the first military actions of the British. As a consequence, the war reporting which spread in the USA came strictly from the Alliance.

Falkland

Number of the army members after the American defeat in Vietnam, were convinced that the main reason for this defeat was the media coverage, especially the TV reporting. This experience made great influence on the reporting from the Falkland War. (2.4.1982 – 15.6.1982) For example, there weren't any television shots via satellite from the Falkland Islands, and the spreading of the photographs was also limited. The aim was to prevent the appearance of large quantity of bad news at the same time. 29 representatives of the media accompanied the deployed troupes, but none of them belonged to any British organization.

During the "information war" with Argentina, the Ministry of Defence wasn't the only one active. The British ambassador gave 60 interviews, out of which, more than 30 were broadcasted on the television or radio. The "House of Commons" Defence Committee engaged in the British information policy during the Falkland War advised the British Government not to count on a fair treatment and objectivity of the media in future, but to evaluate more highly the importance of

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the propaganda. The Committee gave arguments that in long-terms, there is a danger of losing the trust, but yet it did think about the issue just like von Clausewitz would think – “maybe there are profound military reasons that the whole truth should be hidden from the public, the media should be used for presenting disinformation, in order to make a conviction that certain rumors could back up the personal opinions of the individuals”.

The mass media and the terrorism

Certain forms of terrorism, in fact certain actions that should reach to the public through the media reporting, are fabricated on purpose. The terrorists are aware that the journalists are inclined to give advantage to the information of dramatic and violent events and spread them as news. Gabriel Wayman (1990) quotes one Palestinian terrorist, who after the Olympic Games in 1972 stated: “We knew that the people in England and America would not watch the program for the position of the Palestinians if there is a sport show on the other channel... After Munich, nobody would ignore the Palestinians and their cause.” “The theatre of terror” (Wayman) emerges from the adjustment of the way of the news selection; the international terrorism becomes a media event. Even Mahatma Gandy in the struggle for liberation against the British has successfully fabricated violent pseudo-events in order to attract the world attention. He, for example, organized a march of the Darasanna salt factories in 1930 and let the police beat thousands of demonstrators with large logs with steely nails on the top. More than 2000 newspapers reported about this bloody event.

The actions of the Cypress guerilla, which in 1954, under the leadership of colonel Grivas-Digenis fought against the British, were imposed to the world public. Having in mind their military position, the only possibility that remained for the Cyprians was leading psychological war whose main purpose was mobilizing of the world public. For the strategic aims of the war was established that: through heroic actions and self-sacrifice they are striving to attract the attention of the public, above all the attention of the Allies for the Cypress’ issue...through constant and efficient irritation of the British population living in Cypress, we will announce our decisiveness and our will that we are not afraid of victims and that we would not surrender...” The world press informed about this war as the struggle between David and Goliath.

The Algerian freedom movement FLN changed its way of fighting from the aspect of media influence, i.e. instead of military actions in the desert, for which the media did not report at all, they fabricated assassinations and terrorist attacks exclusively for the media. The leader of the FLN, Abane Ramdane, as regards the turning the spotlight of the media towards the liberation struggle, stated: “Is it better for us to kill 10 enemies in a village near Telergma, for which no one would pay attention, or to kill one in Algeria, for which the following day the American media would report?”

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Because of that, the journalists could find themselves in very suspicious constellations. It could lead to nearly symbiotic relations between the journalist and the freedom fighters. The following statement by Robert Kleinman, who during the final phase of the Algerian War led the Parisian Bureau of CBS, clarifies it: "The TV cameraman, even the photo reporter, is faced with a great problem. How to get to the actual spot and shot the people who are being killed? It is exactly what their editors in New York want. If the photo reporter wanted to be certain that there would be a picture, it would have been more useful for him to find out when certain killing would happen. In this manner were filmed some of the most awful pictures of murders in Algeria. If the photo reporter knew that number of killings should happen in one month, and he tries to find out when would the next killing take place in order to shot it, is he as well responsible for the murder, although he in fact did not organize it? The borderline between organizing and reporting about a murder is very thin. I remember about one CBS journalistic team in New York that wondered why were we all punished for such filming. There is a constant pressure on the reporters and the cameramen on the field."

Under the pressure to produce constantly current news, as regards the terrorist reporting, very often the boundaries of responsibility are being crossed. There are number of examples for it: during the hijacking of the Lufthansa's jet "Landshut", the terrorists heard on the radio that the captain is giving information to the authorities about the hijackers. Also, the releasing of the passengers from the Lufthansa's hijacked plane for Mogadishu was, because of the press, brought into great danger. An Israeli radio-amateur taped the conversation through a radio station and told the information about the presence of German soldiers in Mogadishu to the AFP agency (Agence France Presse). The Israeli television and two London newspapers published the news. If the information had reached the terrorists, the lives of the hostages would have been in jeopardy. Also, the debate that was led in the mass media regarding the releasing tactics had some consequences, meaning that this manner of reaction should not be applied in the future. A clear example for irresponsible journalism was the live broadcasting of the releasing of the hostages from an airport in the USA. The policemen tied themselves with cables to the wall in order to enter the building through the windows quietly. The terrorists heard it on the radio and opened fire on the policemen.

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Regional Conference on defence and the freedom of information - Belgrade, November 14/15, 2003