TRAINING AND EXERCISES

Pete DuBois, JWC's Chief Media for TRJR17

3 Question Interview with Pete DuBois about the Information Battlespace of TRJR17

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"JWC Training Audiences face a complex and challenging information battlespace that is unmatched anywhere in NATO."

Why is information environment a top priority for Joint Task Force HQ commanders?

— Commanders understand how the information environment plays a major role in any operation so they appreciate being able to train in the complex and realistic information environment that we create in JWC exercises. We introduce the news and social media environments months before the start of the exercise so that Training Audiences have an early opportunity to begin analysis, enhance their knowledge development of the scenario and even begin engaging on our social media platforms, Chatter and Facepage. Being able to access online news products from local to international outlets and to see and hear from the 'newsmakers' themselves in World News Today television newscasts are excellent training opportunities for Intelligence, Public Affairs, Information Operations, and Psychological Operations, to cite but just a few. Combine that with the level of realism we create, and you have a media environment unequalled anywhere in NATO.

Do you believe that social media can be a game changer?

— The emergence of social media was, and continues to be, a game changer in the information environment and so we have a responsibility to ensure exercise social media play reflects reality. From an Exercise Control (EXCON) perspective, we ensure social media play is effects-based and serves a strategic purpose. Key figures and groups in the scenario have a presence on social media, and their updates provide the Training Audience with additional perspective and/or Intelligence into what is important to these figures or groups. As EXCON members, we also create and manage accounts from random citizens in the scenario. Updates from these accounts can indicate sentiment trends among groups or the population and act as an early warning system for the Training Audience by introducing short but important pieces of information about events in the scenario or the Main Events List/Main Incidents List. From a Training Audience perspective, Chatter and Facepage offer them realistic platforms to hone their own social media skills, particularly in the fields of Strategic Communications and Open Source Intelligence Gathering. Information Environment Analytics is a requirement for our Training Audiences, and in the near future we look to introduce tools they can use to more realistically gather and analyze social media data, such as sentiment trends, in order to make better informed decisions or plan information strategies.

How do you challenge the Training Audiences, for example, do you take into account real world implications of "fake news"?

— JWC Training Audiences face a complex and challenging information battlespace that is unmatched anywhere in NATO. Our Section's main focus is the news media environment where we replicate television and online news products from the local to international level, including products and perspectives from the Opposing Force (OPFOR). An exciting element of our OPFOR media effort is fake news. This type of journalism has actually been around for centuries but has become a huge factor in mainstream and social media over the past few years, which is why we include it in our simulation efforts. Just as in the real world, fake news in an exercise is based on creating an effect, such as deception or aims to mislead an audience with the content appearing on OPFOR websites, social media accounts and in some instances in traditional news. The Training Audience is responsible for determining what to believe, and how to react to this dynamic reality of today's information battlespace. ✦