

Like Cassandra, I Speak the Truth: US Army Psychological Operations in Latin America, 1987–89

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This article examines US Army psychological operations (PsyOp) as practiced during the waning years of the Cold War in Latin America. Certain themes, especially legitimacy, in-group/out-group, and safety/fear are demonstrated to be recurrent in regional PsyOp campaigns, largely because they seem to activate rich inference systems in the human brain. Yet anthropologists and other scholars of Latin America have paid little attention to military PsyOp. Despite our natural susceptibilities, we can best evaluate propaganda (and other claims to knowledge) by following the advice of Karl Popper: competing theories, including politically loaded ones, should always be explanatory and subject to criticism.

The ethnographic documentation of military forays from powerful societies into the developing world is not easily done. Aside from safety considerations, one must contend with government censorship, the military's penchant for secrecy, and what must surely constitute some tricky Institutional Review Board hurdles. As such, it may come as no surprise that few anthropological studies of US military activity involve extensive fieldwork *a la* Malinowski. Yet while we have succeeded in discussing tribal warfare (e.g., Chagnon 1992; Rappaport 1968) and assessing the impact of repressive Third World militaries on downtrodden peasants (see Carmack et al. 1988; Collier and Quaratiello 1994; Manz 1988; Stoll 1993), investigating the armed forces of western industrial societies via classical participant-observation remains largely the purview of journalists and non-anthropologist veterans of recent military campaigns (e.g., Jennings 1989; Marcinko 1993; Rodriguez 1992). Why is this so?

Perhaps the prevailing institutional culture of our discipline plays no small role. The attitude of professional anthropologists towards overseas US military involvement has waxed and waned over the years. Fiascos such as the Vietnam War and the controversial Project Camelot tempered the enthusiasm of North American anthropologists for collaboration with the armed forces and resulted in sensible guidelines being approved by the American Anthropological Association (1967; 1971) regarding the relationship among ethics, ethnography, and clandestine research. Yet this heightened climate of political awareness has had an unintended effect of reducing interest in the study of US armed forces, or so I would argue.

Keeley (1996), for example, notes the reluctance among his generation of archaeologists to even consider the evidence for prehistoric warfare. This glaring omission is reflected in our introductory textbooks: while most have chapter-length discussions of kinship, the arts, or gender (e.g., Crapo 2002; Ember and Ember 2004; Kottak 2003), few if any consider warfare to be a subject worthy of an independent chapter. Given the seriousness of the ongoing US military operations in both Afghanistan and Iraq, it is curious to see anthropologists so peripheral as researchers into US military practice and the armed conflicts of western societies.¹ This need not be so. One can point to recent literature emanating from legal anthropology (e.g., Aronoff 2004; Mamdani 2004) as examples of how anthropologists may inform policy discussion.

I have a proposal to remedy this lamentable state of affairs. The memoirs, journals, and fieldnotes relating the service of members of the armed forces who later went on to become anthropologists constitute a valuable source of unexamined material for our discipline. During World War II, such luminaries as E.E. Evans-Pritchard, Marvin Harris, and Eric Wolf served in the armed forces of their respective countries. Undoubtedly, many other anthropologists since then have shared similar experiences that can shed light on our military culture, both past and present. Yet with a few notable exceptions (e.g., Evans-Pritchard 1973), anthropologists have been slow in producing articles based on their military service.

This paper examines US psychological operations (PsyOp) directed at audiences in El Salvador, Honduras, and Panama during the height of the Cold War (1987–89). The paper is based on my experiences, memoirs, and archives associated with my service as an enlisted man in the First Psychological Operations Battalion (Airborne), which operated out of Fort Bragg, North Carolina, and Fort Clayton, Panama, during those years. While in uniform I participated in two PsyOp missions to Panama and worked with a Peruvian PsyOp team at Fort Bragg. I have supplemented my records with interviews with fellow veterans² of the battalion who operated in Honduras³ and El Salvador, including the battalion's commanding officer and his immediate superior at Group headquarters. Former Ambassador to El Salvador Edwin Corr also graciously answered my questions. The paper focuses on how US political warfare was implemented at both the strategic and tactical levels in Latin America. In writing this article I have several intentions in mind. First, I want to document these operations in order to familiarize my colleagues with recent American military practice in low-intensity conflicts. This desire to educate stems from my perception that the US army's conception of propaganda is poorly understood by both the public and my colleagues. By illuminating some of the basic themes of military propaganda and outlining its intended effects, we may all recognize and understand it more readily. Second, I provide this analysis so that in the time-honored tradition of scholarship, I may subject my own views to robust academic criticism, with the desire of reducing error and arriving at an even better explanation of the phenomenon under question. Finally, I hope to spark the imagination of my colleagues, so that they may turn their critical attention to our

current military involvement in the Middle East. We might learn something that makes things better, or at least, not worse.

PSYCHOLOGICAL OPERATIONS THEORY AND TRAINING

US Army psychological operations are defined as ‘planned activities of propaganda and psychological actions in peace and war directed towards foreign enemy, friendly, and neutral audiences in order to influence attitudes and behaviors in a manner favorable to the achievement of national objectives – both political and military’ (US Department of the Army 1987: Glossary-3). In other words, PsyOp are a special type of propaganda: those directed at *foreign* audiences. PsyOp directed at *hostile* foreign audiences are known as psychological warfare, or PsyWar. Propaganda itself may be defined as ‘the systematic, deliberate propagation of particular ideas transmitted through a variety of communication methods designed to influence the opinions, emotions, attitudes, or behavior of target audiences in order to benefit the sponsor, either directly or indirectly’ (US Department of the Army 1987:Glossary-3). In theory, propaganda can be further divided into three categories: white, gray, and black propaganda. White propaganda is disseminated and acknowledged by the sponsor or by an accredited agency thereof.⁴ Gray propaganda does not specifically identify any source, and black propaganda purports to emanate from a source other than the true one.⁵ The US military is largely concerned with the first two categories; the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) generally handles the black.⁶

US military doctrine conceives of an 11-stage process in the propaganda development cycle (US Department of the Army 1987: 10-3). It is believed that through (1) analysis of the supported unit’s mission, one may (2) derive the PsyOp mission. The PsyOp specialist then moves on to (3) collect information, (4) conduct target analysis, and (5) select appropriate themes and symbols. Should this proceed smoothly, one will (6) select suitable media, (7) develop propaganda, (8) pre-test propaganda, (9) obtain campaign approval, (10) disseminate propaganda, and finally, (11) assess impact.

Careful analysis of the target audience is crucial in all PsyOp. One must consider the conditions under which the target audience lives, the needs (or target vulnerabilities) of the audience, and the degree to which the PsyOp specialist may sway the audience (target susceptibility). The most desirable target audience is a group organized along functional lines, such as an army division (US Department of the Army 1987: 12-2). Next on the list of desired targets is a category of individuals sharing common demographic characteristics such as age, occupation, or sex. The least desirable audience is the aggregate, a group of individuals located in a common geographic area. US Army PsyOp doctrine also recommends avoiding the targeting of primary groups⁷ due to their protectiveness against outsiders; secondary groups are preferable as they are ‘softer’ targets. Deliberately lying to the target audience is generally considered undesirable as it may hamper the credibility of future PsyOp campaigns. Rather, three⁸ basic themes are commonly given preferential

consideration when developing the message to be delivered to the audience (US Department of the Army 1987: 1–3). These themes, never far from the propagandist's mind, are (1) in-group/out-group, (2) legitimacy, and (3) safety/fear.

In-groups are defined as bounded communities of mutual trust and obligation that delimit mutual interdependence and cooperation (Brewer 1999: 2). Studies emanating from psychology (e.g., Allport 1954; Brewer 1999) and anthropology (e.g., Chagnon 1992) document a prevailing attachment to one's own group. This typically entails preferential treatment for members and other manifestations of ethnocentrism. Whether in-group preference is in some way always correlated with out-group hostility remains open to debate. For example, while Allport (1954: 42) noted that feelings towards out-groups range from friendliness through indifference to hostility, other scholars (e.g., Hinkle and Brown 1990) have documented cases of preference for out-groups among disadvantaged social sectors. In any event, it is clear that normal in-group maintenance processes can generate hostility between groups even when actual competition over resources is minimal, and it is this social heterogeneity that provides the fault lines in which any social system can be exploited for political gains (Brewer 1999). In many real-world situations, the goal is to lessen (rather than accentuate) tribal/ethnic conflict (Hamilton, personal communication, 18 October, 2004). Regardless of objective, PsyOp specialists are trained to take advantage of these cleavages and the permeability of in-group/out-group attitudes.

Legitimacy implies an acceptance of the decisions of elites on the grounds that their acquisition and exercise of power is in accordance with generally accepted values and procedures (Jost and Majors 2001). Legitimacy claims often focus on process rather than outcome, and as such, they buffer unpopular decisions from public backlash. PsyOp efforts to enhance or decrease the legitimacy of selected institutions or individuals may act as a force multiplier for more conventional methods of intervention. Safety/fear claims may induce psychological pressure that compels individuals into behaving in conformity with PsyOp objectives. When combined with themes of inevitability, the safety/fear message can increase feelings of fatalism or resignation resulting in benefit to the propagandist's cause by way of reducing the need for more costly means of maintaining compliance.

Sometimes these themes (in-group/out-group, legitimacy, safety/fear) will be expounded using 'glittering generalities' – vague phrases and buzzwords so closely associated with the values of the target audience that they are accepted without having any genuine propositional content. Examples may include 'God', 'freedom', and similar emotion-laden words. Such phrases gain popularity because they activate richly laden inference systems in the human brain (Boyer 2001). 'Transfer' is a related technique wherein the propagandist equates the authority, prestige, and sanction of respected entities to a cause desirable to the propagandist. An example would be a politician closing a campaign speech with a public prayer. It too is a technique that seems to take advantage of our brain's inference systems. 'Card-stacking' (the selective inclusion or exclusion of information to distort the audience's perception of events) and unwarranted

extrapolation figure prominently alongside claims of inevitability, name-calling, and bandwagon themes. The use of testimonial reports by someone (especially 'plain folk') that may or may not be qualified to make such assertions is another well-known propaganda technique.

After graduation from basic training, future PsyOp specialists were sent to Advanced Individual Training in Psychological Operations at the John F. Kennedy Special Warfare Center and School at Fort Bragg. This course lasted approximately two months, during which students were taught how to create and disseminate a variety of propaganda products, both audio and visual. In particular, students were taught how to operate and maintain vehicle-mounted 450-watt and 900-watt loudspeakers; portable 250-watt loudspeakers; and how to undertake target analysis using appropriate propaganda themes. They also received further drilling in basic military skills. After graduation, PsyOp soldiers had the opportunity to train for parachute operations at Fort Benning, Georgia, before being sent to one of four active-duty PsyOp battalions, all stationed at Fort Bragg. Studying a foreign language for three to six months at Fort Bragg's Command Language School (or the Defense Language Institute at Monterrey) would be the final hurdle before the battalions would readily use their new soldiers for foreign deployments.

ORGANIZATION

During the late 1980s, the 4th PsyOp Group consisted of four regionally-oriented battalions: 1st PsyOp Battalion (Latin America); 6th PsyOp Battalion (Europe and Sub-Saharan Africa); 8th PsyOp Battalion (Middle East); and 9th PsyOp Battalion (Asia).⁹ Each battalion had approximately 250 personnel and was further subdivided into at least two companies: Headquarters Company, which contained administrative staff, and Alpha Company, which contained the operational units. The 1st Battalion also had a Forward Support Detachment consisting of 32 soldiers stationed in Panama. Alpha Company of the 1st PsyOp Battalion was subdivided into a Strategic Studies Detachment (SSD); a Propaganda Development Center (PDC); a Printing Press unit; and a tactical Operations Detachment (OpDet). I served for a time in all Alpha Company units except the print plant. The SSD, staffed by approximately 50 soldiers, conducted long-term studies of sensitive foreign countries and deployed primarily to El Salvador to assist the PsyOp effort during that nation's civil war. With about 40 soldiers, the PDC largely operated in Honduras, trying to influence both Honduran attitudes and nearby events in Nicaragua. The PDC also collaborated in developing propaganda with the Peruvian Armed Forces, although this work was largely undertaken at Fort Bragg itself. The OpDet was an all-male field unit comprising approximately 35 soldiers, most of whom were airborne-qualified, and was organized for extended deployment into the jungles of Central America. It was the armed propaganda detachment, and deployed primarily to Panama to assist security forces in the defense of vulnerable sites. The OpDet had both humvee-mounted and rucksack-portable loudspeakers and was typically the most heavily armed outfit deployed by the battalion.

The 1st PsyOp Battalion traces its roots back to 30 November, 1954, when the Headquarters and Headquarters Company of the 1st Radio Broadcasting and Leaflet Battalion was constituted. The company was activated at Fort Bragg in February of 1955 and in 1960 renamed Headquarters and Headquarters Company of the 1st Psychological Warfare Battalion. In 1965, the unit was again reorganized and designated the 1st Psychological Operations Battalion. Members of the 1st PsyOp Battalion aided Cuban refugees during their arrival to Key West in the wake of the 'Mariel Boat Lift' of 1980, and later deployed to Fort Chaffee, Arkansas, to conduct loudspeaker broadcasts in a Cuban refugee camp. The battalion also participated in the 1983 invasion of Grenada. By the late 1980s, the battalion was operating in El Salvador, Honduras, Peru and Panama, countries sharing similar histories of military interference in civilian affairs and human rights abuses. Given this history, and after careful target analysis of the military forces of these nations, US PsyOp targeted at their armed forces emphasized two central objectives: *respect for human rights and military subordination to civilian control*. These PsyOp campaigns also advanced familiar legitimacy, safety/fear, and in-group/out-group themes targeted at both civilian audiences and hostile forces in the region. The following sections examine how these campaigns were implemented in Central America.

HONDURAS: LIGHTS, CAMERAS, ACTION

The Honduras operation was the brainchild of Lieutenant Colonel Layton Dunbar, the then commander of the 1st PsyOp Battalion. Dunbar had been an Army Attaché in the US embassy in Honduras for the two years prior to his assumption of command of the PsyOp battalion and had been concerned that little public activity in support of the US presence was being undertaken. More generally, he was interested in supporting US policy in Latin America, and being most familiar with Honduras, it seemed a good place to start. However, no such operation would be permitted without embassy approval first,¹⁰ so Colonel Dunbar and several members of his staff briefed the embassy in Tegucigalpa and the relevant military authorities at Southern Command in Panama. Prior to this initiative, US embassies in Central America had been skeptical of Army PsyOp, apparently viewing these operations as something best left to the State Department and United States Information Agency. Although there were many skeptics in the embassy, Dunbar had cultivated many allies during his attaché days and obtained approval. At his direction, a task force known as the Military Information Support Team (MIST), made up of PsyOp troops from the PDC, deployed to Palmerola/Soto Cano Air Force Base,¹¹ just outside of Comayagua, Honduras, in early 1987. Soon they were ranging throughout the country¹² conducting psychological operations. After four months, the team rotated back to Fort Bragg and was replaced by a follow-on force. Subsequent MIST deployments continued into the early 1990s.

Each MIST comprised at least one officer and six or seven soldiers. A central purpose of the missions was to cajole the Honduran military into undertaking development projects in a role subordinate to the civilian leadership. In reality, the

US military would do all the logistical, technical, and financial ‘heavy lifting’ behind these operations, but the bulk of credit was to be distributed primarily to the Honduran government, secondarily to the Honduran military, and only then to the US military. I should point out that this falls under the rubric of ‘card-stacking’, because it misleads the public regarding the actual contributions of the respective institutions. In any event, the Honduran people were to be led to perceive that their government was actually doing something positive, and for this perception to gain credibility some tangible benefits had to actually accrue among the target population.

The MIST also conducted television, newspaper, and radio operations designed to familiarize the Honduran citizenry with American soldiers. While US engineers and medical teams undertook construction and health service delivery, they would be filmed and photographed by PsyOp specialists. This exposure was good public relations for US forces in that it portrayed actual benefits flowing from the US military to the Honduran citizenry. A bi-monthly radio program titled *Hello USA* was also established that played popular rock and roll music interspaced with PsyOp information. The messages conveyed various themes, such as freedom of speech, democracy, and nutrition. A television program titled *Ante el Mundo* (Before the World) was also produced, co-hosted by a US PsyOp enlisted man and the civilian head of the Honduran military’s public relations office. The US government purchased TV airtime in 30- and 45-minute blocks during Honduran primetime, specifically to disseminate the show, something of a novelty at the time. Each episode of *Ante el Mundo* had a broadcast duration of approximately thirty minutes, ostensibly to highlight Honduran culture. For example, one of the first episodes examined the Mayan archaeological site at Copan. This episode also displayed museum items from Tegucigalpa depicting Mayan Indian culture. Other episodes featured schools in San Antonio and Comayagua educating children and the Yoro Road being constructed in the Aguan Valley. In a display of transference, each episode was interspaced with commercials showing US soldiers and Hondurans working cooperatively. One such PsyOp produced television commercial that was supposed to air for two weeks wound up being broadcast for 18 months. In a typical example of the ‘plain folk’ approach, the commercial featured an American soldier (one of the psy-warriors) writing a letter to his family with a voice-over that humanized the soldier and explained his presence in Honduras to that nation’s citizenry.

The MIST effort also benefited from the presence of a joint-Special Forces/PsyOp Special Operations Forces Humanitarian Assistance Team (SOFHAT) that conducted health, sanitation, and especially education operations in the countryside near La Ceiba in conjunction with the 4th Honduran Infantry Battalion. This was near the Aguan Valley, home of several leftist movements loosely known as *Morazanistas*, so there was a sense that development programs should be introduced to undercut their support. Latrines and sewage systems were constructed in villages and medical assistance was provided to the populace. This program was so successful that eventually its management came to be the object of

bureaucratic infighting and it was eventually handed over in its entirety to the Special Forces.¹³ A similar civic action program known as the Medical Readiness Training Exercise (MEDRETE) was run by Joint Task Force Bravo out of Palmerola.

In 1988, the 15,000 *Contra* guerrillas operating out of Honduras drew considerable scrutiny from their *Sandinista* foes across the Nicaraguan border. When the Sandinista Army launched an incursion into Honduras to disrupt the Contras, the US responded with a show of force demonstration. 'Operation Golden Pheasant' was launched on 17 March, 1988, near La Paz. Elements from the 82nd Airborne Division and 7th Infantry Division took up positions alongside the 2nd Honduran Infantry Battalion. The propaganda mission documenting this action was tasked out to MIST, which distributed printed material and filmed US and Honduran teams acting in unison and solidarity. One poster, informally known as *Pissing on the Sandinistas Mona Lisa* (because it was based on a similar painting made by a popular Nicaraguan artist) portrayed a US soldier standing alongside his Honduran counterpart, both encircled by dancing children. The Honduran flag is seen fluttering in the background, with one of its five stars hidden from view and a second star only partially visible. The missing star represents socialist Nicaragua; the half-visible star: imperiled El Salvador.

In summary, the PsyOp campaign in Honduras advanced the conventional legitimacy theme at civilian audiences intending to lessen resistance to US and Honduran military activity. This campaign relied heavily on transference, card-stacking, and plain folk techniques, as exemplified in *Ante El Mundo*, and was coupled with another campaign that emphasized the legitimacy of civilian rule directed at the host nation's military. Honduras, relatively stable during the 1980s, did not require enormous expenditures of PsyOp resources. Such was not the case in war-torn El Salvador. The next section examines the more complex PsyOp campaign undertaken in Central America's most densely populated nation.

EL SALVADOR: GOD, COUNTRY, AND YOUR ARMED FORCES

Overall US war strategy in El Salvador emphasized reformation of the Salvadoran government and armed forces. Specifically, land reform, political reform, economic development, and human rights were areas that had to be addressed if the Salvadorans were to continue receiving aid (Corum 1998). Salvadoran President Jose Napoleon Duarte was an astute student of propaganda and understood very well the need to reach out to the lower classes, which had little or no confidence in the oligarchy (Corr, Personal Communication, 29 September, 2004). As part of this effort during the Reagan administration, the US Embassy in San Salvador had been able to direct MilGroup money into underwriting a nationwide chain of radio stations that provided for widespread dissemination of politically oriented material (Corr, Personal Communication, 29 September, 2004). A scholarly journal, *Análisis*, was started in 1988, supported in part by the *Universidad Nueva San Salvador*, and targeted at literate audiences with the intention of competing with the influential left-wing literature emanating from the *Universidad Centroamericana*

(Corr, Personal Communication, 29 September, 2004). More cartoon-like material that glorified the military was prepared for the rural poor. PsyOp advisors were also assigned to the Salvadoran military's C5 (PsyOp Section) and other US government agencies became heavily engaged in the propaganda campaign.¹⁴ The Strategic Studies Detachment deployed a team to El Salvador in mid-1989, and in support of this mission, they delivered an advanced PsyOp course to area and brigade commanders of the Salvadoran army.¹⁵ A primary objective for the PsyOp element was to impart on the Salvadoran Armed Forces respect for human rights. For example, US PsyOp produced a training film for the Salvadoran army called *Dos Patrullas* (Two Patrols), which depicted the consequences of alternative methods of interacting with civilians. In *Dos Patrullas* Part One, a Salvadoran army unit is seen sweeping into a village and abusing the citizens. After the army's departure, the civilians are eagerly joining the insurgent *Frente Farabundo Martí para la Liberación Nacional* (FMLN), which had been fighting the government since 1980. In Part Two of the film, the same Salvadoran army patrol is seen entering the village, only this time treating the civilians with dignity and attempting to address their needs. Now the villagers alert the army to where the rebels are hiding. The insurgents are tracked down and neutralized.

The US contingent also assisted in the production of television propaganda discrediting the FMLN. The television piece featured interviews with civilians criticizing the guerrillas for their violence and displayed family members grieving over the deaths of relatives. The commercial conveyed the familiar PsyOp themes of in-group/out-group and legitimacy: a narrator urged the audience to rally around their armed forces, country, and God (legitimacy; also a glittering generality); the depiction of civilian deaths emphasized the distinction between the out-group (FMLN) and the in-group, the average Salvadoran civilian. However, limited pre-testing¹⁶ with select civilian audiences suggested that the background music (*Jesus Christ, Superstar*, along with merengue) was inappropriate, and the commercial had to be reworked.

1st Battalion members also worked directly for the Salvadoran Civil–Military Affairs Section at the *Estado Mayor*, (the Salvadoran Pentagon) and at their equivalent to West Point, the *Escuela Militar*, advising a unit of 27 female Salvadoran PsyOp specialists. The Salvadoran unit was divided into three nine-person, regionally oriented teams targeting the eastern, northern, and central/western provinces. Each of the teams had one or two US PsyOp specialists attached as advisors. Propaganda was targeted directly at FMLN guerrillas, particularly via weapons-for-cash appeals disseminated through leaflet drops. Once a leaflet had been designed it would be delivered to Salvadoran authorities for approval (which was rapid and near-automatic) and then quickly mass-produced for distribution to El Salvador's patrolling infantry battalions, or dropped over enemy territory by planes or helicopters. In a campaign designed to implicate the guerrillas in the death or dismemberment of innocent civilians, leaflets warned people to beware of mines planted by the FMLN. One particularly dramatic poster displayed a little girl horribly mutilated by an FMLN explosive. This particular poster was created by

a US government official who held a Ph.D. in anthropology (throughout the war, members of the CIA were heavily involved in the Salvadoran PsyOp effort).

Overall US/Salvadoran PsyOp strategy also included efforts to create a national hero who could compete with leftist icons like Joaquín Villalobos or Camilo Cienfuegos. The idea to promote one particularly aggressive officer, Colonel Domingo Monterosa, as such was compromised by his participation in the 1981 massacre at El Mozote, where several hundred civilians were butchered by the Salvadoran army. This officer was later killed by the FMLN and eventually eulogized as a hero.¹⁷

Perhaps the weakest aspect of the US PsyOp effort in El Salvador was, at least initially, an unwillingness to tackle the extreme Right (Corr, Personal Communication, 29 September, 2004). This changed somewhat after the discovery of a plot directed at taking the life of Ambassador Tom Pickering, and eventually culminated in the dispatch of Vice President George Bush to El Salvador (on 12 December, 1983) to read the riot act to the High Command of the Salvadoran Military. Every Salvadoran officer above the rank of Colonel (including all members of the High Command) was gathered into a room and subjected to a dressing down by Bush, who told them in no uncertain terms that the human rights abuses had to stop.¹⁸ A strategic assessment released in 1996 (Clawson 1996) determined that such political pressure was generally ineffective and that US Army PsyOp had no discernable effect on the war (*Dos Patrullas* notwithstanding).

In summary, US PsyOps in El Salvador were in some ways similar to those in Honduras, specifically in the targeting of their armed forces with humanitarian propaganda. However, because of the civil war, US PsyOp strategy required a more intense campaign using in-group/out-group and safety/fear themes and techniques directed at civilian audiences and an armed enemy. In both peace and war, when US forces are deployed in large numbers these safety/fear and in-group/out-group themes tend to figure prominently in PsyOp campaigns. These themes are understandable in the context of a US public wary of sustaining casualties in a foreign adventure. To illustrate these conditions I now direct the reader's attention to the case of Panama, where in the late 1980s a smoldering peacetime dispute finally erupted into war.

WELCOME TO THE JUNGLE: TACTICAL LOUDSPEAKER OPERATIONS IN PANAMA

The OpDet initially deployed a 16-man section¹⁹ (consisting of six two-man humvee-mobile armed propaganda teams and a four-man command element) to Panama on 24 June, 1988, and maintained a presence there until after the completion of Operation Just Cause (the invasion of Panama) in the winter of 1989–90. The OpDet was tasked with conducting loudspeaker operations in support of a Marine company defending the Arraijan Tank Farm (ATF), a large fuel storage facility located in the jungle near Howard Air Force Base. The ATF contained approximately 32 underground fuel storage tanks, each defended by an 11-man

Marine squad manning nearby trenches and bunkers. There was tremendous concern that terrorists would try to detonate fuel, recreating the Beirut Marine massacre of 1983. Indeed, Arraijan was a dangerous place in 1988: in March a Marine had been killed there in unclear circumstances²⁰ and a special forces soldier would die in the vicinity later that year. Unidentified intruders, presumably from Panamanian strongman Manuel Noriega's²¹ military, were thought to be organizing probes of the Marine position, and in July 1988, another incident occurred during which the Marines discharged 554 rounds at suspected infiltrators.²²

The OpDet was also to contend with the expected disturbances during 4 July, 1988 celebrations at Fort Clayton, which was to be our home base when not in the field. Intelligence reported that Noriega's paramilitaries, members of the so-called Dignity Battalions, were going to precipitate a riot at one of Fort Clayton's gates to interrupt the celebration. Supposedly, they were going to fire into the US troops guarding the gates in hopes that the Americans would return fire and kill innocent civilians. In anticipation, military police were stationed at every gate along with PsyOp detachments deploying our Korean War era loudspeakers. The PsyOp teams were to play loud salsa and merengue music, with various contingency tapes prepared just in case of trouble. Depending on the situation, the teams were prepared to order crowds to disperse or issue surrender appeals (these are examples of safety/fear themes). On 4 July it rained on and off all day, and the only Panamanians who appeared were legitimate civilians enjoying the celebrations. There was no demonstration, only mild excitement when Willard Scott showed up to tape an episode of the Today Show.

A couple of days later OpDet arrived at the Arraijan Tank Farm (ATF) gaining familiarity with the terrain to be defended. The Marines had already constructed bunkers surrounded by concertina wire and deployed machineguns and automatic grenade launchers to augment their individual shoulder-fired weapons. Each two-man PsyOp team, replete with humvee, loudspeaker, and rifles, was to spend 48 hours at a time in the heavily defended complex before being replaced by the next team and rotating back to Fort Clayton. At the ATF, OpDet was initially positioned on Tank 16, a small hill that overlooks the entire valley, but was soon moved about 100 metres aside to Tank 15. Each evening at 6:00 p.m. a second PsyOp team would deploy for a 12-hour shift guarding Arraijan's Tank J while a third team deployed nightly with security forces at the Ammunition Supply Point (ASP). Finally, a fourth team spent nights guarding the runway and aircraft at Howard Air Force Base.

The trip-flares and sensors set up in the jungles surrounding Arraijan were activated every night, largely due to the abundant wildlife in the area of operations. When a trip-flare or sensor went off, OpDet would broadcast the PsyOp message: *Atención. Atención. Esta es una advertencia. Esta es una area de defensa estadounidense. Entrar en este area sin autorización es una violación de las leyes panameñas y estadounidenses. Salga del area inmediatamente. Usaremos la fuerza necesaria para asegurar este area.* (Translation: Attention. Attention. This is a warning. This is a US defense site. To enter this area without authorization is a violation of both US and Panamanian law. Leave the area immediately. We will

use whatever force necessary to secure the area). This message is yet another example of the safety/fear theme.

Howard Air Force Base was the easiest assignment in the rotation, as the 12-hour night shift was undertaken in the comparative security and comfort of the base. The humvee would be parked next to the hanger on the runway with the OpDet personnel sprawled out on top of the vehicle supported by the open hatch as if it were a lawn chair. At the ASP the OpDet drove the humvee around a road just inside the perimeter playing messages like some ice cream truck on a hot summer eve. There was a certain amount of horsing around undertaken at the ASP. For example, the Panamanian security forces had a small checkpoint located alongside the nearby Panamerican highway that was an easy target for unauthorized harassment. I remember that one night we quietly pulled up in the tree line a couple hundred metres away from the station with our lights out. We slowly turned up the wail on our 900-watt loudspeaker, which produced a sound not unlike a hovering aircraft. You could see the Panamanians looking up in the sky trying to see what was up there. We elevated the volume rapidly and then shut off the system, making it sound like the 'hovering craft' had suddenly departed. The Panamanians were quickly on the radio calling headquarters.

Gradually, the PsyOp enlisted personnel devised new methods of harassment.²³ One technique involved bringing an air force sentry and his guard dog along for the ride. A microphone would be held up to the German shepherd's face, and the dog handler, keeping his animal tight on the leash, would give the order to attack. The sound of the dog barking at deafening decibels would send the Panamanians' own guard dogs into a frenzy. The 'broadcast' would conclude by chambering a live round into an M-16 over an open microphone. Subsequently, some PsyOp troops took to moaning in a sexually suggestive manner over the loudspeakers aimed at the Panamanian positions. One could get away with this unauthorized horseplay at the ASP because forested hills lay between the patrol area and Army/Marine headquarters.

By early 1989, OpDet was running armed propaganda patrols in the jungle surrounding Arraijan. Each patrol consisted of a four-man Marine security element and seven PsyOp troops. 'Beware of Dogs', 'No Hunting', and 'No Intruding' signs would be nailed to trees while the Marines provided security. The Beware of Dogs signs had drawings of ferocious looking dogs on them and again exemplified the safety/fear theme. The OpDet also began running airmobile operations using a 900-watt system rigged up to an OH 58 helicopter that played the standard PsyOp warning message used in the Arraijan region. This aerial mission sometimes involved unauthorized broadcasts of the popular Guns N' Roses song 'Welcome to the Jungle'.

During the actual combat phase of the Panama intervention (Operation Just Cause, 20 December, 1989, through early January 1990), OpDet troops parachuted into combat with the 75th Ranger Regiment and were soon followed by loudspeaker teams supporting the Army's 82nd Airborne Division. Members of a two-man PsyOp team received decorations (Navy Commendation Medals with V-Devices)

for accompanying Navy SEALs into combat and redirecting Panamanian gunfire from the SEALs onto themselves through the use of loudspeaker broadcasts. Other PsyOp personnel, including the OpDet teams stationed at Fort Clayton and Arraijan prior to the onset of the invasion, assisted US forces in overcoming Panamanian resistance. In subsequent urban operations in and around Panama City, the OpDet broadcasted surrender appeals directed at Panamanian soldiers, instructions for civilians, and played popular music intended to quell uneasy crowds. Pre-recorded tapes²⁴ were quickly discarded in favor of live broadcasts by US troops of Panamanian origin fluent in the local dialect. This operation culminated in the famous incident in which Noriega was surrounded in the *Nunciatura*, the Papal Embassy in Panama City. PsyOp personnel dressed in civilian attire mingled with the crowds gathered around the *Nunciatura*, handing out lapel pins displaying US and Panamanian flags and encouraging spectators to shout popular anti-Noriega slogans such as ‘*Cara de Piña*’ (Pineapple Face, in reference to his unfortunate complexion). It was widely reported in the press that PsyOp troops played rock music around the clock to fray Noriega’s nerves and compel him to surrender. This is incorrect. The music was played only during daylight hours and the actual objective was to hamper microphone eavesdropping, so as to conceal from the press the delicate negotiations for Noriega’s surrender (along with the contingency plans the US had devised if he were unwilling to turn himself in peacefully). In fact, the loudspeakers were aimed at the adjacent Holiday Inn, home of the press, rather than at the *Nunciatura*. When journalists began inquiring as to why the PsyOp loudspeakers were pointing away from Noriega, 1st Battalion personnel suggested (disingenuously) that the deployment *enhanced* acoustical effects within the *Nunciatura* (to drive Noriega crazy), a response that appears to have been accepted at face value by much of the mainstream media.

A 12-man strong special forces A-Detachment along with two PsyOp personnel ventured into the mountains in order to seize the transmission station used by Panama’s popular TV-2. After PsyOp took over TV-2 they televised directly to large swaths of civilians, stressing the legitimacy of the invasion. Both the CIA and PsyOp broadcast radio messages that may have reached up to 70 per cent of the Panamanian population (Friedman 2004). While in the mountains, they were able to initiate a limited cash-for-weapons program directed at the local residents. Broadcasts were also undertaken by National Guard Volant/Commando Solo EC-130 radio transmitting aircraft. Virtually the entire 1st PsyOp Battalion deployed to Panama for Just Cause, along with select elements drawn from elsewhere in the 4th PsyOp Group. This enabled the US forces to print 300,000 safe-conduct passes guaranteeing proper treatment and medical attention that were distributed in leaflet form. These leaflets came in three versions, and were designed to appeal to the Panamanian Defense Forces, Dignity Battalions, and members of the regime. A cash-for-weapons program popularized by PsyOp induced Panamanian civilians to turn over 56,000 weapons to US forces. By 8 January, 1990, US PsyOp in Panama had disseminated over one million leaflets and handbills, 50,000 posters and 550,000 newspapers (Goldstein 1996).

In conclusion, US PsyOp in Panama had a little of everything: legitimacy themes (e.g., naming the invasion ‘Operation Just Cause’; TV broadcasts), safety/fear themes (e.g., Arriajan messages, posters, safe-conduct passes, surrender appeals), and name-calling (e.g., *Cara de Piña*). These themes were directed (in varying degrees) at both international and Panamanian audiences. The Panamanian campaign was the first in which PsyOp gained a measure of exposure before wider US civilian audiences. Unfortunately, this did not generate much in the way of academic analysis.

DISCUSSION AND SUMMARY

The late Eric Wolf (1999: 291) called on anthropologists to refocus their attention on the convergence of ideas and power. This paper has taken up the challenge issued by Wolf. Elites everywhere develop strategies to promulgate visions of cosmic order that move hearts and minds in the direction preferred by organized power, and Wolf’s well-known case studies (1999) document this phenomenon in a general way. I have gone further in this paper by outlining specific methods of propaganda development and campaign. By now the reader should be reasonably well acquainted with the basic PsyOp themes (legitimacy, in-group/out-group, safety/fear) along with the techniques (glittering generality, plain folks, etc.) used to disseminate them in Latin America. Three general audiences were routinely targeted: friendly military, civilian, and hostile enemy. Somewhat surprisingly, the intended effects of the propaganda were less malevolent than one might first suspect; the goals were often as simple as civilian control over the military and respect for human rights. The notion that professional military propagandists tried to influence the Salvadoran and other Latin American armed forces into behaving more humanely may appear counterintuitive, yet I maintain that was indeed the case.²⁵

According to Donald Hamilton, (who served as the Public Affairs Counselor for the US Embassy in El Salvador from 1982–88) the basic weakness of US Army PsyOp in Latin America was due to inadequate pre-testing and post-testing: the absence of metrics made it impossible to determine the effectiveness of campaigns or how to adjust when necessary (Hamilton, personal communication, 18 October, 2004). Hamilton believes that this could be remedied by bringing social scientists qualified in this type of research into the propaganda development process. For example, producing a film such as *Dos Patrullas* sounds like a good idea, but did anyone bother to pre-test and post-test the captive audience of Salvadoran soldiers viewing the material? Not to the knowledge of Hamilton, who asserts that accurate social science data was possible to collect in El Salvador and in fact was collected in certain limited circumstances. He notes that during 1982, polling was undertaken that demonstrated again and again that the FMLN would win only between 15 per cent and 17 per cent of the popular vote in any free election. The initial postwar elections seemed to confirm this assessment. Similarly, public opinion polling in Iraq undertaken from June of 2003 through April of 2004 was highly effective. Response rates were sky-high, with only seven or eight refusals out of thousands

polled. (It was only after May of 2004 that the security situation deteriorated enough to compromise the effectiveness of polling.) These polls suggested a widespread dislike for the large-scale presence of US troops, a sentiment borne out by subsequent developments in the insurgency, with it spreading from the Sunni heartland to previously quiet Shi'ite areas (Hamilton, personal communication, 18 October, 2004).

However, my point is not that the world needs more propaganda. Far from it: increases in communication efficiency have left us saturated in the stuff. And given the vested interests at stake in the current political milieu, it should come as no surprise that many of our time-honored stories from both the right and the left of the political spectrum are arranged by PsyOp specialists. For example, a favorite memory for rightists is the episode where Iraqi citizens supposedly mobilized to topple a statue of Saddam Hussein, when in fact the entire episode was arranged by US Marines and PsyOp (*Seattle Times*, 4 July, 2004). On the other side of the fence, leftists tend to downplay the evidence suggesting Rigoberta Menchú's story (as reported in Burgos Debray 1984) was largely shaped by the propaganda needs of the Guatemalan Guerrilla Army of the Poor. When looking at Menchú's account, one is struck by the lengths to which the authors highlight the in-group/out-group theme by artificially creating a conflict between wealthy *ladinos* and poor Indians in a gripping, yet now discredited version of the Menchú family's land dispute (see Stoll 1999). The masking of Rigoberta's Spanish language fluency and Catholic school education appears to be a deliberate exercise in positioning her as a 'legitimate' representative of the poor and oppressed 'plain folk'. While such *testimonio* is certainly a popular genre in anthropology, I submit that the technique is even better established in PsyOp doctrine and practice.

My point, rather, is more closely pertaining to epistemology in anthropological studies. Although in PsyOp we were instructed to avoid deliberately lying if at all possible, I was struck by the fact that this did not seem to preclude the issuing of vague and untestable assertions (e.g., God²⁶ is on our side, we will prevail), themes that are routinely made not only by the US military to foreign audiences, but by our own politicians directed to the US public. After suitable deliberation, I became increasingly interested in understanding how one should evaluate claims to knowledge. Anthropology is centrally concerned with evaluating alternative epistemologies – 'other ways of knowing' – and this analysis has influenced our understanding of both conventional ethnography and propaganda as exemplified in the Menchú book. Although a full-length exposé on the philosophy of knowledge is beyond the scope of this paper, I feel obliged to champion Popperian epistemology as our best current theory explaining the nature of knowledge and how it is created. Popper was aware of the advantages accrued for all of us if we were to construct our conjectures in a way that takes risks and exposes our ideas maximally to the process of error elimination. He recognized rational analysis in both philosophy and science to consist of a *problem-solving process* that involved the identification of a problem, conjectured solutions, criticism, and the replacement of erroneous theories. This is a process that seems to me to be largely absent from the propaganda development

cycle, and perhaps more sadly, it is also absent in certain ultra-relativist circles of academia (for a fuller discussion of relativism see Sokal 1996; and Sokal and Bricmont 1998). In other words, the ‘glittering generalities’ of Army propaganda strike me as being no different from the dense verbiage liberally sprinkled in the writings of, say, Latour (1988), or Lacan (1970). If you spend several years creating military propaganda and then sit through several graduate seminars on ‘Contemporary Theory’ you tend to figure this out. Rather than subject aspiring anthropologists to a tour of duty in PsyOp, I suggest that our undergraduates would be well served by exposure to a less relativistic epistemology. I submit Popper (2002 [1959]) as our preferred guide for analyzing claims to knowledge (including propaganda²⁷) not as an exercise in orthodoxy, but as a standard by which promising alternative epistemologies may be evaluated.²⁸

The US Department of the Army (1987) recommends analyzing enemy propaganda via the ‘SCAME’ method. This means dissecting the elements of propaganda into the following categories: source, content, audience, media, and effect. This breakdown presumably facilitates the Army’s understanding of who is trying to influence who, and by what means. However, to my knowledge, the US Army does not publish guidelines instructing one how to assess the veracity of presumed propaganda. To my knowledge, neither did Popper. However, a Popperian approach to propaganda analysis would look something like this. First, we Popperians view the source of a theory as irrelevant: analysis will center on content. Likewise, audience and media will be of no importance when assessing truth-content. There is a consideration that is superficially similar to effect: *implications*. That is to say, we take the implications of a theory seriously, however counterintuitive it may be to common sense or our expectations. For example, a deep and successful theory such as Einstein’s general relativity may postulate a counterintuitive notion like the curvature of spacetime. Taking this notion seriously has altered our understanding of physics. Now if we take the implications of propagandistic theories likewise seriously, dilemmas are often exposed that reveal just how bad the underlying explanations really are. For an example of bad propaganda, consider the case of an internet conspiracy theory currently in vogue, which asserts that the US government staged the 9/11 attacks by firing missiles into the Pentagon while making the actual hijacked passenger aircraft disappear. When one begins to consider the implications of this theory it quickly reveals itself to be propaganda based on bad explanations. Where did the missing aircraft go to? What about all the witnesses that saw the planes strike the buildings? How could the aircraft vanish without detection? Which Air Force or Navy pilots, and their base or carrier support teams, would willingly undertake such a horrific action? And there would have to be thousands of people, both government employees and ordinary people, in on such a conspiracy. The explanation breaks down when we see the absurdity of taking these implications seriously.

In closing, I will also contend that much of my recent research focusing on human rights and the methods by which we may best protect them draws on insights gained from my prior military experience. It is here in the messy realm of human

rights and armed intervention that the military-veteran-turned-anthropologist may contribute to policy discussion and anthropological discourse in novel ways. Almost certainly, some of our returning veterans from Afghanistan and Iraq will take up graduate studies in anthropology. Some of these veterans may have witnessed first hand events such as those that occurred at Abu Ghraib prison. These witnesses may have recommendations derived from their service that may end the catastrophic policies and procedures that led to the prison abuses. These are voices deserving to be heard in anthropology.

NOTES

1. This lack of connection between anthropology and the study of industrial society military culture has also been noted in a recent essay by Ben-Ari (2004), who reviews three rather novel ethnographies (Hawkins 2001; Lutz 2001; McCaffrey 2002) that tackle the subject.
2. I am indebted to my fellow veterans William Depalo, Layton Dunbar, José Hernandez, Jeff Sloat, and Cynthia Wilson, for reading earlier versions of this paper and providing information during its development. I am grateful to David Deutsch for responding to my inquiries on Popperian epistemology. I also thank Ambassador Edwin Corr (Ret.), John Fishel, Donald Hamilton, and Annelise Riles, all of whom also read the paper; their observations proved to be incisive.
3. I did visit Honduras in 1989 with elements from the battalion, but only in passing. Although I helped prepare the team deploying to El Salvador, my only visit there was as a graduate student in 1992.
4. Except where otherwise noted, all definitions are derived from the US Department of the Army's Field Manual 33-1 Psychological Operations (1987), the manual supplied to my graduating class of PsyOp specialists.
5. One event that I strongly suspect to be a black propaganda operation instigated by wealthy landowners occurred during my dissertation fieldwork. At 3:00 a.m. on 19 May, 2000, in a squatter settlement on the outskirts of Chilapa, Guerrero, Mexico, 30 well-armed masked individuals entered the shantytown yelling 'long live the EPR' (*Ejército Popular Revolucionario*, a local guerrilla movement) and burned down four homes while wounding four squatters. Landowners had been trying to remove the squatters, while the EPR had no known reason to displace the residents. This looks like black propaganda to me.
6. See the notorious CIA Manual 'Psychological Operations in Guerrilla Warfare' (Tayacan 1985).
7. Conversely, the CIA targets primary groups. See Tayacan (1985: 26).
8. Our manual, FM 33-1 Psychological Operations (US Department of the Army 1987) indicates that 'inevitability' is one of the three most common themes, and indeed, it is widely used. However, I know of no empirical studies that measure theme usage. I have deleted 'inevitability' and substituted the 'safety/fear' theme, which I found to be more recurrent in our operations.
9. Currently (as of late 2004), all loudspeaker teams have been amalgamated into a specialized tactical PsyOp Battalion (the 9th), which includes a Ranger School-qualified descendent of OpDet known as Detachment 940. See Cosner (2004) for more on Detachment 940. This Ranger training is a novelty, for in the 1980s we were generally permitted to attend only PsyOp, Language, Airborne, and Survival Schools. The 1st, 6th, and 8th Battalions remain regionally oriented units. A propaganda dissemination battalion has been created (the 3rd Battalion), and the reserves maintain as specialized PsyOp/Prisoner of War Battalion (13th PsyOp Battalion). See Starunskiy (2003) for further elaboration of current force standing.
10. According to Dunbar, peacetime PsyOp must be closely coordinated with the resident Ambassador and satisfy his need for control and accountability. Ambassadors are very territorial and when things go wrong they must answer to Washington and to the local government. The battalion's programs were always established to the satisfaction of the relevant Ambassador (Layton Dunbar, personal communication to the author, 14 September, 2004).
11. Established in 1983, Palmerola housed 2,000 US troops (Joint Task Force Bravo) that assisted US efforts in Central America's civil wars.

12. While flying through bad weather the PsyOp helicopter once landed by mistake in Guatemala, setting up an impromptu meeting with a Guatemalan army patrol that surprisingly let the Americans go with no fuss.
13. Regarding this turf war, Dunbar states the following: 'SOFHAT was another 1st POB [psychological operations battalion] invention. I briefed the proposal to Army Special Operations Commander MG [Major General] Leroy Suddath, who was taken with the idea. I told General Suddath that since the ultimate purpose of humanitarian assistance activities was psychological, PsyOp should be in charge. Suddath agreed and that's how the program began. Putting PsyOp (1st POB) in charge and with the SF troops [Special Forces] attached and under the command of PsyOp was unheard of at the time. It had always been the other way around. The 7th SF [Special Forces] Group nursed that grudge for a long time, and as you point out, they eventually took it over, but not until General Suddath had retired' (Lieutenant Colonel Layton Dunbar, personal communication to the author, 14 September, 2004).
14. According to Hamilton, (personal communication to the author, 18 October, 2004) the Embassy's Public Affairs section concentrated its propaganda on Salvadoran elites, via seminars, personal contacts, cultural affairs, etc.
15. In the Spring of 1988 the battalion was tasked with delivering a similar PsyOp course to the Peruvian military that would go beyond mere training and instead produce actual propaganda to be used against the shadowy Shining Path guerrilla movement. The project received the code name 'Inti' in reference to the Sun God of the Inca Empire. Officers from Peru's *Estado Mayor* arrived at Fort Bragg in May and were divided into two-person teams, each paired with a US team consisting of an officer and several enlisted personnel. Each of these joint US-Peruvian teams was responsible for the production of a separate line of products (e.g., leaflets, television, and so on). The themes selected to highlight in the campaign, '*visión y acción*', were targeted at the Peruvian Armed Forces in an effort to promote a more humane conduct of the war. The final product also included leaflets and posters demonizing the Shining Path's leader, Abímael Guzman, and a video utilizing Pink Floyd's *Run Like Hell* that extolled the virtues of the Peruvian Armed Forces.
16. According to Sgt. Sloat (personal communication to the author, 10 September, 2004), pre-testing in most cases was limited to showing the propaganda to available family members or friends of the Salvadoran PsyOp specialists. To my knowledge, no pre-testing was done using a more stringent research design.
17. On 23 October, 1984, Monterosa captured what he thought to be a transmission station used by the FMLN's propaganda dissemination unit, Radio *Venceremos*. Actually, he had taken possession of a well disguised booby-trap that exploded, killing Monterosa and several of his associates in mid-flight (US Institute of Peace 2004).
18. Ambassador Corr reported this incident to me. The section on operations in Honduras draws on interviews I had with Col. William Depalo (Ret.), Col. Layton Dunbar (Ret.), Maj. José Hernández (Ret.), and Sgt. Jeff Sloat. The discussion of El Salvador rests on interviews with Ambassador Edwin Corr (Ret.), Counselor Hamilton, Col. John Fishel, Maj. Hernández, and Sgt. Sloat. The section on operations around Arraijan, Panama, relies on my personal notes and memories. For Operation Just Cause I rely on various sources, both published and unpublished, and conversations with Sgt. Sloat.
19. I participated in this OpDet mission in Panama from 24 June, 1988, to 24 October, 1988, and again from 5 January, 1989, to 30 April, 1989.
20. The Marine who died, Corporal Villahermosa, had been killed by friendly fire when the Marines split into two groups to track down suspected intruders and inadvertently fired at the wrong target. The Panamanian government asserted that the Marines were simply being spooked by monkeys or deer, while the Marines argued that intruders were probing their positions. I was unable to ascertain exactly what was going on. Various incidents involving gunfire continued at Arraijan throughout 1988 and early 1989.
21. During 1987 and 1988, anti-Noriega propaganda was disseminated in Panama by the CIA-affiliated Radio Liberty, a clandestine operation headed by US citizen Kurt Muse. One broadcast actually overrode Noriega's official state of the nation address, infuriating the strongman. Muse was eventually captured, but was subsequently liberated by US Army commandos (Hunter 2004).
22. I was one of two PsyOp troops on duty at Arraijan during this incident, which occurred at Tank 15.
23. The officers had their moments too. During the late 1980s, one US officer (not a member of the 1st Battalion, but one who nevertheless was involved in PsyOp in El Salvador) would allegedly get drunk one Saturday night in Panama and fire a pistol in the air in front of the Nicaraguan Embassy while challenging the Sandinistas to a fight. He may be a reason why US Ambassador to Panama

(and ex-Ambassador to El Salvador) Dean Hinton did not always maintain tranquil relations with his PsyOp advisors.

24. Incidentally, one US soldier broadcast a surrender appeal in Spanish so broken that it prompted the following shout from a surrounded Panamanian soldier: 'Speak English so we can understand you!'
25. However, state-level societies also have mechanisms to do dirty work, and for the United States, it was the CIA that created the more troubling propaganda, such as that instructing Contras in the arts of implicit and explicit terror (see Tayacan 1985).
26. The most colorful example of invoking God that I am aware of occurred during the early 1960s as part of an anti-Castro operation in Cuba. Rumors were spread announcing Christ's immanent return and the Cuban people were urged to rise up and overthrow the regime (Wright 1991). On the suggested date of return, a US submarine was supposed to surface off the coast of Cuba and set off fireworks, a sort of pre CGI example of special effects intended to simulate Jesus' arrival. I have heard rumors that something similar was considered prior to the 2003 invasion of Iraq, but that story may be apocryphal.
27. I did consult with David Deutsch, a theoretical physicist well grounded in Popper's philosophy, about the matter. Deutsch notes that if we suspect an argument to be propaganda we should not reject it on that account. Alleged 'facts' suspected of being propaganda should be analyzed in terms of a conflict between two rival theories of the origins of those 'facts'. For example, we might conjecture that someone is lying; or that someone is mistaken, or perhaps card-stacking. In each case we should make sure that our theories are explanatory (requiring them to be testable is in general too strong, but whenever we can make them testable we should) and take seriously the implications of those theories, and earnestly seek out ways of criticizing them (Deutsch, personal communication, 2 November, 2004).
28. According to Popper (2002[1959]), scientific theories cannot be proven true, but if they are false they can be demonstrated to be untrue. The logic inherent in the growth of knowledge is unidirectional towards disproof. Compare this to the 1930s logical-positivists, who sought verification of theories, whereas Popper sought only their falsification. For good overviews of Popperian epistemology, see Deutch (1997), Magee (1983), and Miller (1994). See Radnitzky and Bartley (1996), Chalmers (1999), and Mayo (1996) for promising new ideas that may come to be regarded as improvements on Popper.

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