



# RISING FROM THE ASHES

PSYOP in Operation DESERT SHIELD, Part 1

by Jared M. Tracy

**Abstract:** Like much of the U.S. Army, Psychological Operations (PSYOP) had been shaking off the post-Vietnam malaise prior to Operation DESERT SHIELD. Less than a year removed from U.S. operations against Panamanian dictator Manuel Noriega, Iraq's attack on Kuwait in August 1990 was a jolt that helped PSYOP rise from the ashes and claim its rightful place in the Army arsenal. This success did not come without challenges in the pre-conflict phase.

Fueled by media images of Iraqi soldiers surrendering by the thousands, U.S. Army Psychological Operations (PSYOP) during the Persian Gulf War has been heralded as a success. What the public did not see, however, was the work getting the massive PSYOP infrastructure in place to wage that concerted campaign of influencing enemy soldiers to defect or surrender. For starters, the near-crippling delay in theater PSYOP plan approval during Operation DESERT SHIELD (August 1990 – January 1991) might have knocked PSYOP out of the fight before the war began. That disaster was averted thanks to improvements in PSYOP training, equipment, and capabilities in the preceding years; the adaptability of PSYOP leaders and soldiers on the ground; the recent combat experience of Operation JUST CAUSE in Panama; and the habitual relationships that 8th PSYOP Battalion (POB) had built with partners in the region.

This article provides necessary historical context for the successful PSYOP effort in Operation DESERT STORM (January – February 1991). In particular, it details the state of PSYOP from the immediate post-Vietnam era through Iraq's August 1990 invasion of Kuwait; the coalition buildup in Saudi Arabia during Operation DESERT SHIELD; and the frustrating but ultimately successful effort to get a viable PSYOP plan approved for the impending conflict. It sets the stage for future articles on PSYOP force deployments, operations, and accomplishments before and during Operation DESERT STORM. The story begins with PSYOP after Vietnam.

(image credit: Army Magazine)



Captured Iraqi soldiers during Operation DESERT STORM, 1991.



(image credit: US ARMY)

The 2nd POG colors are cased at its inactivation ceremony at Fort Bragg, 13 September 1972.

## PSYOP in the Post-Vietnam War Era

After the drawdown of U.S. forces from Vietnam in the early 1970s and the end of the war in 1975, PSYOP—like the U.S. Army as whole—fell into disrepair. Many PSYOP units were deactivated or transferred to the reserve component, including the 2nd and 7th PSYOP Groups (POGs). Remaining active-duty units were typically undermanned, poorly equipped, and not combat-ready. Still, several institutional measures in the 1980s kept PSYOP on life support. For example, on 26 July 1984, the Department of Defense (DoD) approved DoD Directive S-3321.1, “Overt Psychological Operations Conducted by the Military Services in Peacetime and in Contingencies Short of Declared War,” known simply as the Overt PSYOP Peacetime Plan (OP3). This document established “policy, provides procedures, and assigns responsibilities for the planning, development, programing, direction, execution, and control of overt PSYOP conducted by the DoD in peacetime” and in contingency operations.<sup>1</sup> OP3 was fine for peacetime planning but, as DESERT SHIELD later proved, it was not a good recipe for getting a theater PSYOP plan approved quickly or efficiently.

Despite giving PSYOP much-needed attention in





COL Jonathan W. Anderson, Jr., Director of the PSYOP School, COL William A. Hudson, 4th POG Commander, and Harris Peel, U.S. Information Agency, conduct an interview about PSYOP at Fort Bragg, soon after the Group's reactivation on 13 September 1972. 4th POG had been inactivated in late 1971 after spending roughly four years in Vietnam.

the Pentagon, OP3 had little impact at the unit level. Headquartered at Fort Bragg, North Carolina, the 4th POG was the only active duty PSYOP Group. According to Colonel (COL) Alfred H. Paddock, Jr., former 4th POG commander (1979-1982) then serving as a senior PSYOP officer in the Office of the Secretary of Defense, "one active duty PSYOP organization consisting of a group headquarters, a radio section, and three battalions is insufficient to support all unified command

requirements in mid- or high-intensity conflict."<sup>2</sup> Further, the Group lacked personnel and serviceable equipment, its training was haphazard, and its readiness state was low. As later 4th POG commander COL Anthony H. Normand recalled, the



4th POG Distinctive Unit Insignia (DUI)

Group in the 1980s was in "atrophy as far as the capability to plan for and conduct [PSYOP]."<sup>3</sup>

Units saw little immediate improvement on the ground. However, additional DoD measures began to help PSYOP more directly. In 1984, President Ronald W. Reagan directed the Secretary of Defense (SECDEF) Caspar W. Weinberger to improve PSYOP units and capabilities. The next year, the SECDEF approved the DoD PSYOP Master Plan, which placed greater joint emphasis on military PSYOP.<sup>4</sup> According to Paddock, the Master Plan would "serve as a comprehensive framework for the phased, fundamental revitalization and improvement of the department's capabilities to employ [PSYOP] effectively, worldwide, in support of national objectives in peace and crisis and at all levels of conflict."<sup>5</sup> Conditions were slowly improving for U.S. Army PSYOP.

Assuming command of 4th POG from COL William A. DePalo, Jr., in December 1988, COL Normand sought to put key ideas from OP3 and the 1985 DoD PSYOP Master Plan into practice. First, he tested OP3 processes by integrating PSYOP into theater-level training exercises. Second, he tasked 4th POG civilian analysts with developing products that would be more useful for deploying PSYOP soldiers than rehashing encyclopedic country studies.<sup>6</sup> Third, he developed a new deployment model in which the Group commander would integrate at the Unified Command level to become the senior theater PSYOP officer. The Group commander would develop theater PSYOP plans; conduct joint, interagency, and combined coordination; and bolster battalion-level PSYOP Task Forces (POTFs), which would execute the approved PSYOP campaign.<sup>7</sup>

The first proof-of-concept came during Operations JUST CAUSE and PROMOTE LIBERTY, the U.S. effort



President Ronald W. Reagan works in the Oval Office, 31 May 1985.

(image credit: NARA)



**Left:** Secretary of Defense Caspar W. Weinberger approved the 1985 PSYOP Master Plan, an example of renewed senior-level emphasis on military PSYOP in the mid-1980s.

**Top Right:** COL Anthony H. Normand commanded the 4th POG from 1988 to 1990, and was 'dual-hatted' as the Joint PSYOP Group commander during Operation DESERT SHIELD, 1990.

**Bottom Right:** With a reputation of repression and brutality, Iraqi President Saddam Hussein ordered his forces to invade Kuwait on 2 August 1990, even with his nation weakened after an eight-year war with Iran.



(image credit: US ARMY)



(image credit: PBS SoCal)

to remove Panamanian dictator Manuel Noriega and then help restore a democratic government in Panama, in 1989-1991. Prior to JUST CAUSE, COL Normand handled much of the contingency planning with XVIII Airborne Corps (the core of Joint Task Force – South in Panama), along with Lieutenant Colonel (LTC) Dennis P. Walko, commander of the U.S. Southern Command (USSOUTHCOM)-aligned 1st POB. However, once combat operations began, Normand assimilated into the USSOUTHCOM staff, while Walko led the POTF at JTF-South. JUST CAUSE allowed PSYOP “to go in and operate at the levels in which we could be most effective,” Normand said.<sup>8</sup> As one report noted, “Numerous personnel with experience gained in [Panama] were available to provide expertise in planning, organizing, and supervising preparations for Operation DESERT STORM.”<sup>9</sup> Panama was both a pilot for 4th POG’s new deployment model and a rehearsal for the larger PSYOP effort to come in the Middle East.

## Background of DESERT SHIELD

Weakened and cash-strapped after a bloody eight-year war with Iran, on 17 July 1990, Iraqi President Saddam Hussein accused Kuwait and the United Arab Emirates of overproducing oil to further hurt Iraq. Hussein threatened to take measures against Kuwait, including military action, if it did not slow oil produc-

tion (there were also territorial disputes between Iraq and Kuwait). Hussein’s threats met with global condemnation. The U.S. reaffirmed its support of friendly Arab oil nations; Kuwait defended itself diplomatically throughout the region; and the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries rejected Hussein’s production demands.<sup>10</sup>

Having positioned its forces along the border, Iraq invaded Kuwait on 2 August. It did not stop there. Baghdad declared Kuwait a province, built up and consolidated its forces, seemed poised to invade Saudi Arabia, and threatened to use weapons of mass destruction if necessary. On the eve of war in mid-January 1991, Iraq had five corps, roughly forty infantry, armor, and mechanized divisions, and 545,000 troops dedicated to the Kuwaiti Theater of Operations. In addition, Iraqi forces constructed obstacle belts of barbed wire and minefields along the Kuwaiti-Saudi border to secure its gains and deter attack.<sup>11</sup>

The world responded swiftly. With Resolution 660, the United Nations (UN) condemned Iraq and authorized economic sanctions. President George H.W. Bush ordered U.S. forces to Saudi Arabia for Operation DESERT SHIELD to protect U.S. citizens; prevent further Iraqi aggression; affect Iraq’s withdrawal from Kuwait; and restore the Kuwaiti government. The U.S. rapidly deployed fighter aircraft and soldiers from the 82nd





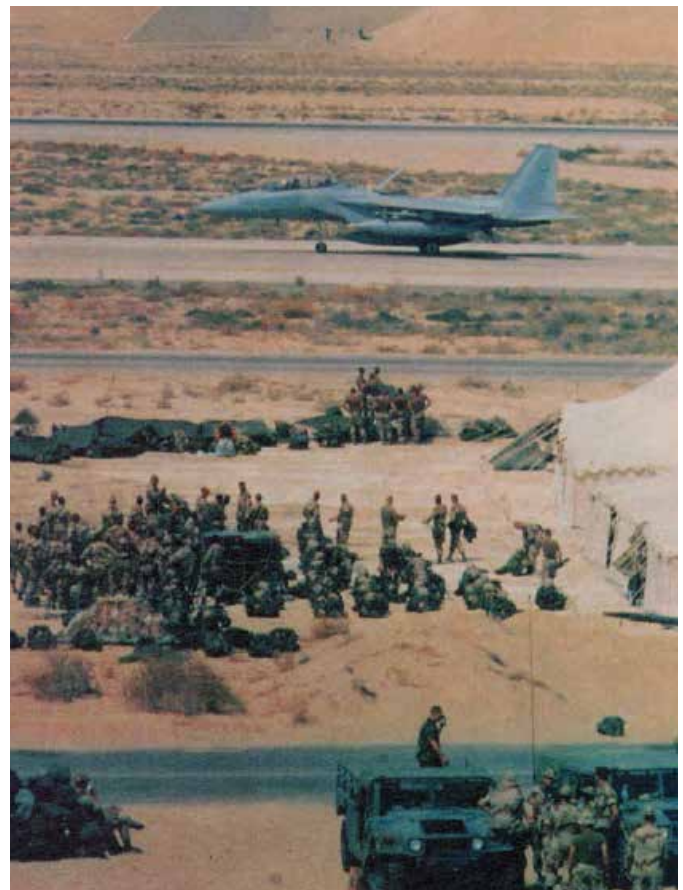
(Image credit: Department of Defence)

A Kuwait M-84 tank during Iraq's invasion of Kuwait, 1990.

Airborne Division. These were the meager beginnings of a U.S.-led coalition representing more than thirty nations that deployed to the desert in late 1990. On 17 August, President Bush authorized the first call-up of reservists for 90 days (later extended to 180 days) to augment active-duty forces, with the first U.S. Army Reserve (USAR) units mobilizing a week later.

The first phase of Operation DESERT SHIELD deployments (August – October 1990) included Headquarters (HQ), U.S. Central Command (USCENTCOM); HQ, U.S. Army, Central (USARCENT); HQ, XVIII Airborne Corps; and units from the 82nd and 101st Airborne Divisions, the 24th Infantry Division (ID), 1st Cavalry Division, 197th Infantry Brigade, and the 3rd Armored Cavalry Regiment (ACR). U.S. units staged behind Saudi and coalition forces along the border. Led by General (GEN) H. Norman Schwarzkopf, Jr., USCENTCOM exercised command and control over U.S. and British forces and maintained close cooperation with French forces. Led by Saudi Lieutenant General (LTG) Khalid bin Sultan, Joint Forces Command (JFC) commanded other nations' forces. These commands worked through a Coalition Coordination, Communication, and Integration Center (C3IC).<sup>12</sup>

With almost a quarter million U.S. troops deployed by late October, Bush authorized another 200,000 in



(Image credit: Department of Defence)

A Royal Saudi Air Force F-15 taxis past American soldiers newly arrived in Saudi Arabia, August 1990.





George H.W. Bush, Commander-in-Chief during successful military actions in Panama and the Middle East in his short time in office, speaks at the White House in early 1991.

The United Nations Security Council discusses sanctions on Iraq after that nation's invasion of Kuwait in August 1990.

early November to reflect the expanded mission from defense of Saudi Arabia to the liberation of Kuwait. This began the second phase of deployments (November – February), which included HQ, VII Corps (from Europe), and units of the 1st ID, 1st and 3rd Armored Divisions (ADs), 2nd ACR, and others.<sup>13</sup> The mounting coalition on the Arabian Peninsula would soon be complemented by additional forces to Iraq's north.

In September 1990, U.S. Air Forces in Europe (USAFE) briefed GEN John R. Galvin, Commander, U.S. European Command (USEUCOM), about opening a second front from northern-neighboring Turkey. In December, following Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS) approval, USAFE received the JTF-Proven Force Operation Order (OPORD). It directed the appointment of a JTF commander and staff, and for planning to begin. Major General James L. Jamerson, Deputy Chief of Staff for Operations, USAFE, became Commander, JTF-Proven Force. Lacking Turkish Government approval for U.S. offensive operations from within its borders, JTF-Proven Force was activated at Ramstein Air Base, Germany, on 7 January 1991. Gaining last-minute Turkish approval before the air war began, USAFE activated the 7440th Composite Wing at Incirlik Air Base, Turkey, to fly missions against Iraqi targets.<sup>14</sup>



GEN H. Norman Schwarzkopf, Jr., Commander-in-Chief, USCENTCOM (CINCCENT), during Operations DESERT SHIELD/ DESERT STORM, 1990-1991.



LTG Khalid bin Sultan, Commander of Joint Forces Command, visits a Nigerian military outpost during Operation DESERT SHIELD.

On 29 November 1990, UN Resolution 678 authorized military force against Iraq if it failed to withdraw from Kuwait by 15 January 1991. A last-ditch attempt at diplomacy in Geneva, Switzerland, failed when, on 9 January, the Iraqi Foreign Minister rejected a letter from President Bush, delivered by Secretary of State James A. Baker. On 12 January, the U.S. Congress granted Bush the authority to proceed with military action. The deadline passed three days later without Iraq withdrawing.<sup>15</sup> The stage was set for Operation DESERT STORM. It was in this context that the U.S. Army would establish a multi-battalion PSYOP infra-

## MAJOR ARMY FORCES

### Organization for Combat

#### ARCENT

##### XVIII AIRBORNE CORPS

- 82d Airborne Division (-)
- 101st Airborne Division (AASLT)
- 24th Infantry Division (MECH)
  - 197th Infantry Brigade (MECH)
- 3d ACR
- 12th AVN BDE
- 18th AVN BDE
- XVIII Corps Artillery
  - 18th FA BDE
  - 212th FA BDE
  - 196th FA BDE
- 6th Light Armoured Division (FR) (TACON)
  - 2d BDE, 82d Airborne Division (OPCON)
- Other Corps Assets

##### VII CORPS

- 1st Armored Division
  - 3d BDE, 3d Infantry Division
- 3d Armored Division
- 1st Infantry Division (MECH)
  - 2d Armored Division (FWD)
- 1st Cavalry Division (-)
- 2d ACR
- 11th AVN BDE
- VII Corps Artillery
  - 210th FA BDE
  - 42d FA BDE
  - 75th FA BDE
  - 142d FA BDE
- 1st Armored Division (UK) (TACON)
- Other Corps Assets

#### SOCCENT CONTROL

- 5th Special Forces Group
- 3d Special Forces Group (-)

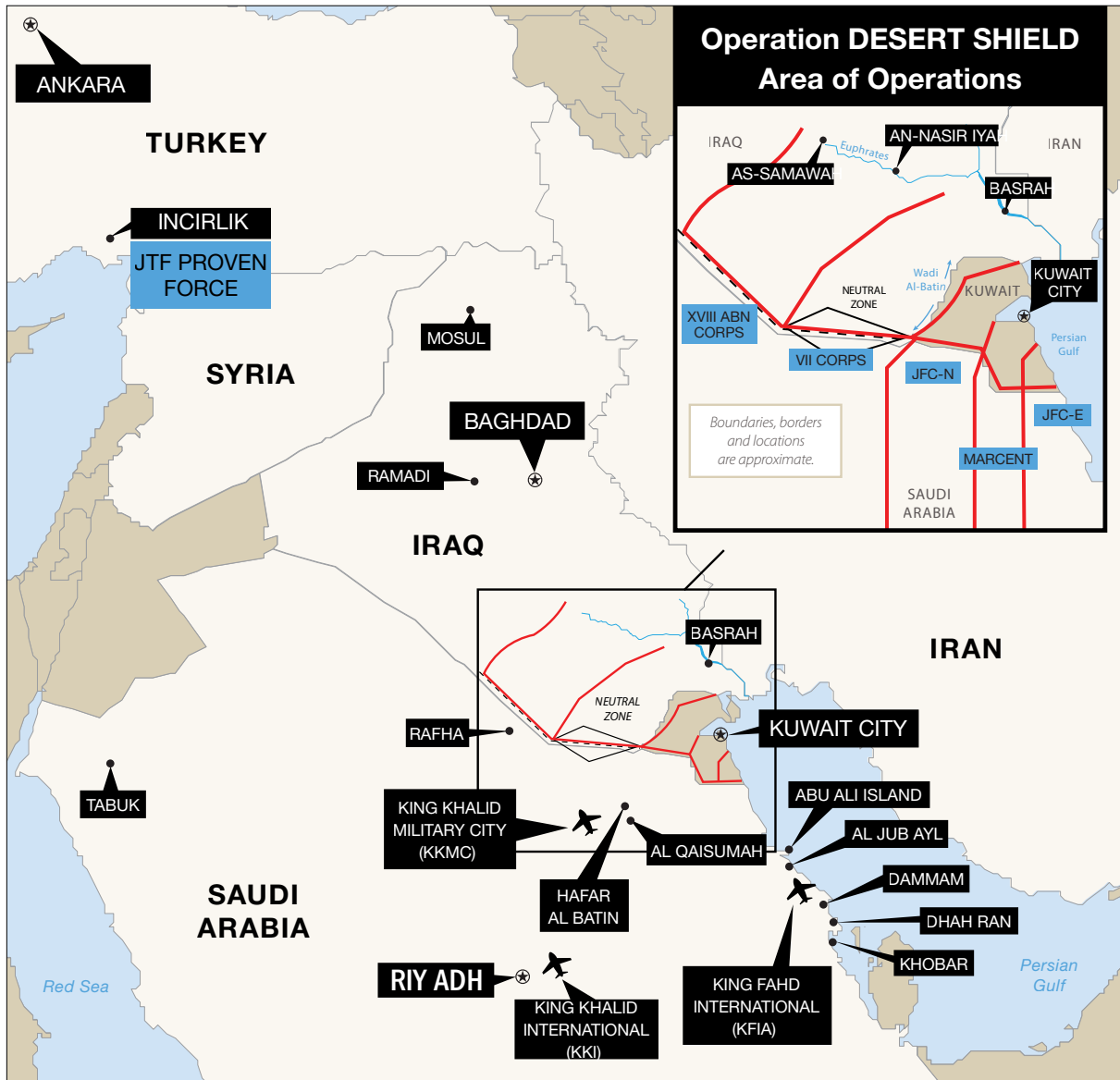
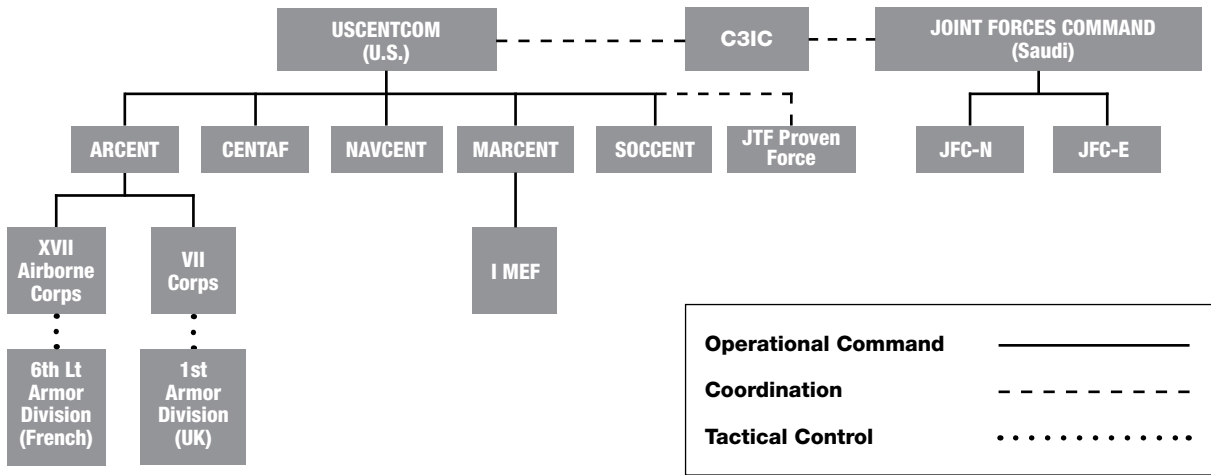
#### MARCENT CONTROL

- 1st BDE, 2d Armored Division

#### ABBREVIATION KEY:

- AASLT - Air Assault
- ACR - Armored Cavalry Regiment
- AVN BDE - Aviation Brigade
- BDE - Brigade
- FA BDE - Field Artillery Brigade
- MECH - Mechanized
- TACON - Tactical Control
- OPCON - Operational Control

# COALITION COMMAND RELATIONSHIPS





structure to support the coalition in the upcoming fight against Iraq.

## Background to PSYOP in DESERT SHIELD

Key to operations in both Panama and then Saudi Arabia was the Fort Bragg-based 8th POB, commanded by LTC Jeffrey B. Jones. Though regionally aligned with USCENTCOM, the 8th POB had replaced 1st POB in Panama in early 1990. While many 8th POB officers and soldiers were in Panama in the months prior to Iraq's invasion, others were traveling on temporary duty (TDY) to the U.S. Military Training Mission (USMTM) in Saudi Arabia; to Defense Attaché Offices in Iraq, Kuwait, Djibouti, Yemen, Jordan, and Pakistan; and for training throughout USCENTCOM. According to Jones and his Executive Officer (XO), MAJ Jack N. Summe, these TDYs later proved their weight in gold during the Persian Gulf War.<sup>16</sup>

Soon after the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait, GEN Carl W. Stiner, Commander, U.S. Special Operations Command (USSOCOM), announced plans to send PSYOP forces to Saudi Arabia. Loudspeaker personnel from the 4th POG deployed with the first 2,300-man lift from the 82nd Airborne Division, but this was just a start. Orders came down from



8th POB DUI



(Image credit: NARA)

Almost immediately after the invasion, GEN Carl W. Stiner, Commander-in-Chief, USSOCOM (CINCSOC), ordered U.S. Army PSYOP forces to prepare for deployment.

U.S. Army Special Operations Command (USASOC) through 1st Special Operations Command (1st SOCOM) to 4th POG to task-organize personnel and resources; develop and pack products and scripts; and make plans to utilize host nation media and print facilities. Initial steps were also taken to deploy the 8th POB, the 9th POB, and soldiers and media production and dissemination assets from the new Product Dissemination Battalion (PDB).<sup>17</sup> In the meantime, some TDY 8th POB soldiers in Saudi Arabia helped lay the foundation for their arrival.

Staff Sergeant (SSG) Gregory A. Parmele was with USMTM in Dhahran, Saudi Arabia. Understandably, the non-commissioned officer (NCO) made frequent calls back to Fort Bragg to his parent battalion, namely the S-3, MAJ Richard A. Williams, for information, guidance, and planning. On 8 August, he informed 8th POB that the U.S. had received tentative permission to use two state-owned Aramco radio stations, an Aramco television station, and print facilities in Dhahran, and a Saudi government TV station in Dammam. He also reported a mixed atmosphere of fear, anxiety, and apathy among the Saudi population, and initial Saudi desires to keep requests for U.S. support quiet. Parmele



(Image credit: U.S. Army)

Having only recently returned home from Panama, 8th POB commander LTC Jeffrey B. Jones deployed again to head the 8th PSYOP Task Force (8th POTF) in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia.

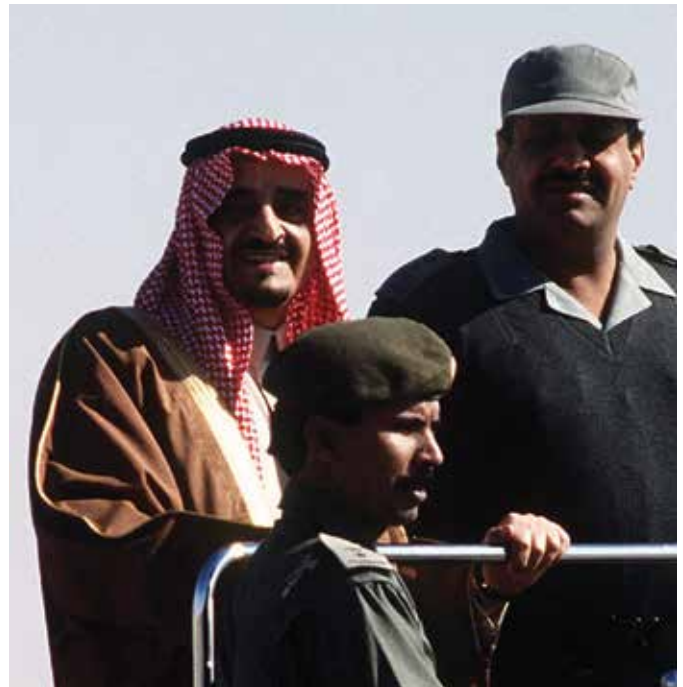


USAF Maj. Gen. Donald L. Kaufman (right), Chief, USMTM, accompanies Secretary of Defense Richard B. Cheney (center) during his visit to Saudi Arabia in August 1990. The two-man USMTM “PSYOP Desk” (not pictured) helped pave the way for additional PSYOP forces. USMTM was the senior U.S. headquarters until the arrival of USCENTCOM-Forward.

and another NCO formed an ad hoc PSYOP desk within the USMTM, and linked up with John Kincannon, a U.S. Information Service (USIS) representative serving in the U.S. Embassy.<sup>18</sup> The two sergeants accepted help from whoever was willing to offer it.

As the world feared wider conflict and the U.S. weighed its options, the two 8th POB NCOs coordinated with the Saudi Ministry of Defense (MoD) and Ministry of Information (MoI) on many topics, including the assignment of Arabic linguists, and how to address public concerns in eastern Saudi Arabia.<sup>19</sup> They learned that the MoI must approve all PSYOP messages emanating from Saudi facilities, but not from U.S. assets. Parmele also reported the presence of 70,000 Kuwaiti refugees in eastern Saudi Arabia, some of whom they wished to talk to (with Saudi assistance) to gain information potentially useful for PSYOP.<sup>20</sup>

On 9 August, Parmele again called the 8th POB. After relaying Saudi King Fahd’s public admission of U.S. support, he informed his unit that USIS representatives in the Saudi capital of Riyadh were arranging use of local media facilities on their behalf. At the same time, USMTM elements were locating translators for



Saudi Arabia’s King Fahd (rear, left) and LTG Khalid Bin Sultan, JFC Commander (rear, right), review Royal Saudi troops. King Fahd welcomed and openly acknowledged U.S. and international military support.



when PSYOP forces arrived.<sup>21</sup> Finally, USMTM used its PSYOP team as its media liaison. On 13 August, the soldiers provided the foreign press pool with information on Dhahran; escorted journalists to view USAF F-15s and other equipment at the airfield; and provided an interview to the English-Arabic language *Saudi Gazette*.<sup>22</sup> Resisting requests from senior leaders to begin PSYOP messaging too soon, the NCOs continued making interagency contacts, recorded Arabic speeches and news, and talked with Iraqi defectors and Kuwaiti refugees.<sup>23</sup> This “PSYOP Desk,” ably manned by two well-placed junior PSYOP NCOs, held the line until PSYOP forces began arriving in strength about a month later.

### JPOG and the Theater PSYOP Plan

While these NCOs worked from Saudi Arabia, a thirteen-person cell from 4th POG, led by COL Normand, traveled from Fort Bragg to MacDill Air Force Base (AFB), Florida, a week after the Iraqi invasion to begin the PSYOP planning effort. Just as Normand had recently been the USSOUTHCOM PSYOP officer in Panama, he was now the USCENTCOM PSYOP offi-

cer, with his team designated as the Joint PSYOP Group (JPOG).<sup>24</sup> The JPOG would establish “overall theater policy and operational themes for the campaign, subject only to [Commander-in-Chief, USCENTCOM (CINCENT)] approval”—at least that was the hope.<sup>25</sup> As it turned out, getting the theater PSYOP plan approved in the Pentagon, as required by the aforementioned OP3, proved far more difficult than anyone had anticipated.

With GEN Schwarzkopf temporarily inaccessible due to the hustle-and-bustle within USCENTCOM, COL Normand and the JPOG met initially with the Director of Operations, Maj. Gen. Burton R. Moore (USAF), and others on the staff to see what they had in mind. From these meetings, they surmised that USCENTCOM seemed content to leave planning details up to the JPOG. First, the JPOG developed 64 short-term themes and talking points for JCS approval and interagency use when speaking with the international media. Days before the JPOG deployed in late August, three civilian analysts from 4th POG accompanying the JPOG (who had helped develop those themes) returned to the Group at Fort Bragg. From there, they were to analyze open-source media for signs of those talking points and

An EC-130E Volant Solo aircraft of the 193rd SOG, Pennsylvania Air National Guard, taxis on the runway. The 193rd had worked with PSYOP forces in Panama in 1989-1990; escorted the JPOG to Saudi Arabia in late August 1990; and supported the PSYOP effort through the end of the Persian Gulf War.



(Image credit: NARA)

(Images credit: NARA)



**Left:** BG John A. Leide, Director of Intelligence, USCENTCOM, deployed to Riyadh in August 1990 with USCENTCOM-Forward. It was Leide who informed the JPOG of GEN Schwarzkopf's desire for a MILDEC plan for eastern Kuwait. **Middle:** USAF Maj. Gen. Burton R. Moore, Director of Operations, USCENTCOM, while in Riyadh as part of USCENTCOM-Forward. Led by COL Normand, the JPOG reported directly to the J-3. **Right:** GEN Colin L. Powell, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff (CJCS), 1989-1993.

update the JPOG daily on their findings. They were also to keep tabs on Iraqi propaganda.<sup>26</sup>

Meanwhile, the JPOG then turned to the more pressing problem: creating a workable framework for the overall PSYOP effort in the Persian Gulf. According to Normand, the first request came from Brigadier General (BG) John A. Leide, the USCENTCOM Director of Intelligence, who told him, "We just got through talking here [and] Schwarzkopf wants a PSYOP plan that will tie down some Iraqi units on the coast to keep them where they are up in the . . . northern coastal areas of Kuwait." Accordingly, the JPOG developed a basic concept for military deception (MILDEC) plan involving a mock amphibious invasion of a U.S. Marine Corps (USMC) Task Force. This was the genesis of the MILDEC campaign known commonly as 'The Wave' that came to fruition several months later, and "turned out to be a pretty successful program."<sup>27</sup>

A broader PSYOP plan was needed, however. The JPOG identified three target audiences: the Iraqi military (broken down by types of units), the Iraqi people, and Hussein's inner circle. The JPOG did not get much farther before deploying to Riyadh on 31 August 1990, on board an EC-130E from the 193rd Special Operations Group (Pennsylvania Air National Guard), as part of USCENTCOM Forward. Assigned to the J-3, USCENTCOM, the JPOG was supplemented with the 8th POB/POTF commander, LTC Jones; a PSYOP Planner (MAJ) from USEUCOM, to begin contingency planning for a possible second front from Turkey; and Liaison Officers (LNOs) from USIS and other government agencies. Located at the Gulf Cooperative Council (GCC) building, the theater-level JPOG would help formulate policy, advise the CINC, and support the US-

ARCENT-assigned 8th POTF upon arrival. The JPOG resumed efforts to write the theater PSYOP program.<sup>28</sup>

By mid-September, the JPOG had completed the PSYOP plan, named BURNING HAWK, which consisted of 26 objectives and 117 supporting lines-of-effort (LOEs) meeting National Command Authority and CINCCENT intent. The common thread throughout BURNING HAWK was placing blame for the international crisis squarely on Saddam Hussein. Containing overt and covert aspects, the plan would entail significant interagency coordination and cooperation. Accordingly, USCENTCOM created an Information Coordinating Committee (ICC). Chaired by the USCENTCOM J-5, the ICC included COL Normand and representatives from such agencies as the Public Affairs Office, the Judge Advocate General, the U.S. State Department, and USIS. Once this committee agreed on the plan, it entered USCENTCOM staff review before going up for GEN Schwarzkopf's approval.<sup>29</sup>

On 19 September, as the plan weaved its way through USCENTCOM amidst the coalition buildup in Saudi Arabia, Normand sent an informal update to the PSYOP community back home. In it he lauded the ICC, which had helped develop the USCENTCOM PSYOP plan, then pending CINC approval. In expectation of this approval, recently arrived 8th POTF soldiers were preparing specific products. Finally, he informed the Fort Bragg community of a draft USEUCOM PSYOP plan, "which will be a vital link in supporting theater programs, as many audiences overlap [between the] two AORs [Areas of Responsibility]."<sup>30</sup> At the time, things were progressing smoothly, and few in Saudi Arabia anticipated the difficulty that lay ahead in getting BURNING HAWK approved in the Pentagon.





(Image credit: OMFAN/ARRIYABI DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY)

Constructed in 1987, the Gulf Cooperative Council building in Riyadh was the location of the JPOG and 8th POTF.

The day after COL Normand’s informal update, GEN Schwarzkopf approved BURNING HAWK. It then went up the chain to the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff (CJCS), GEN Colin L. Powell, in accordance with OP3.<sup>31</sup> At this point, things ground to a halt, delaying proactive PSYOP efforts in DESERT SHIELD. According to 8th POTF leadership, the “approval process, mandated by [OP3], was glacial . . . Quite literally, months of potential psychological preparation of the battlefield were wasted.”<sup>32</sup> Another source echoed this point: “A delay in Washington approval of the initial theater plan . . . precluded [PSYOP] activity during the buildup of U.S. and coalition forces in 1990.”<sup>33</sup> A post-war summary agreed, “In effect, we had forfeited the PSYOPS [sic] battlefield to the Iraqis for three months because of the lengthiness of our approval process.”<sup>34</sup> Normand remarked, “This thing turned into a comedy of errors . . . because the approval process was not well defined.”<sup>35</sup> In reality, the problem was not that the approval process was not well defined; it was that OP3 was uncondusive to an efficient or quick turnaround in a near-war scenario.



(Image credit: NARA)

From left to right, GEN Powell, Secretary of Defense Cheney, GEN Schwarzkopf, and Under Secretary of Defense for Policy Paul D. Wolfowitz discuss pending military operations in the Persian Gulf, in early 1991. Just weeks earlier, Wolfowitz and Cheney had approved only a fraction of the PSYOP plan BURNING HAWK, which had been picked apart piece-by-piece in Washington since September.





In a press conference during Operation DESERT SHIELD, GEN Schwarzkopf said, “If we do have to go to war, PSYOP are going to be an absolutely critical—critical—part of any campaign that we must get involved in.” Despite significant delays in PSYOP plan approval, Schwarzkopf’s words soon rang true.

Within a week of arriving at the Pentagon, BURNING HAWK was split into a covert and an overt (‘white’) plan, each requiring approval through separate channels. A DoD ‘white’ sub-plan, consisting of 35 out of the original 117 actions, was developed, approved by the Joint Staff, and sent up the chain for approval by SECDEF Richard B. Cheney. Even under ideal conditions, this would take weeks. On 12 October, the Deputy Under Secretary of Defense (Security Policy) (DUSD[SP]) recommended that the Under Secretary of Defense for Policy (USD[P]), Paul D. Wolfowitz, approve less than half of the DoD sub-plan. Once this was done, it was still three weeks before Cheney received the curtailed DoD portion of BURNING HAWK.<sup>36</sup> Come November, PSYOP forces in Saudi Arabia were hardly closer to being able to conduct operations in DESERT SHIELD.

Despite the painfully slow bureaucratic process in Washington, other stars were aligning in the USCENTCOM AOR. In October 1990, an ad hoc, PSYOP-focused Coalition Warfare Cell was formed, consisting



Command of 4th POG transferred to COL Layton G. Dunbar in December 1990. A 173rd Airborne Brigade combat veteran from Vietnam, 8th SF Group alumnus, and former 1st POB commander, Dunbar was the right man for Group command as war with Iraq drew near.

of two Saudi and two U.S. PSYOP officers. Locally, it developed a PSYOP plan similar to BURNING HAWK. Counterparts in Cairo, Egypt, were also writing a plan. The Saudis proposed a new Combined PSYOP Cell, attached to the 8th POTF. With support from GEN Schwarzkopf and LTG Khalid, this cell was formally established under the command of a Saudi brigadier general, and would consist of U.S., Saudi, British, Egyptian, and Kuwaiti personnel.<sup>37</sup> Over the ensuing months, the cell worked with the 8th POTF in developing, translating, and pretesting products, to include program content for the future Voice of the Gulf. The Combined PSYOP Cell helped bridge the gap between the initial deployment of PSYOP forces and the final approval of the theater PSYOP plan in late 1990.<sup>38</sup>

Back at the Pentagon, SECDEF Cheney approved the skeletal DoD ‘sub-plan’ on 1 November. It still took two more weeks for it to be turned into formal implementation guidance. On 13 November, USCENTCOM learned that the SECDEF had approved merely six out of the original 117 LOEs in BURNING HAWK! Incensed by this outcome, USCENTCOM planned to appeal it. In late November, 4th POG informed the Joint Staff that the CINCCENT wanted a broader PSYOP plan, and that several disapproved initiatives were being returned for reconsideration. This happened on 5 December, with resubmission of 21 actions (accompanied by some harsh words from GEN Schwarzkopf to get it done). JCS approved and forwarded only 16 of them, which Wolfowitz approved in mid-December, some three months after BURNING HAWK was ini-





A C-141 Starlifter departs from Pope Air Force Base, North Carolina, for Saudi Arabia, January 1991. That month, around 200 PSYOP soldiers from the active-duty 6th POB, USAR 13th POB, and USAR 18th, 19th, 244th, 245th, and 362nd PSYOP Companies left Pope AFB to join some 400 others from the 4th POG, 8th and 9th POBs, and Product Dissemination Battalion, already in-country.

tially submitted.<sup>39</sup> The next month was spent getting buy-in for the scaled-down plan from the Saudis and other Arab partners.<sup>40</sup>

On 17 December 1990, after laboring for over three months to write and get approval for the PSYOP plan, COL Normand relinquished command of 4th POG to Special Forces (SF)- and PSYOP-qualified COL Layton G. ‘Gerry’ Dunbar, a former 1st POB commander, who had been in-country working side-by-side with Normand since October.<sup>41</sup> Normand was initially uncomfortable with leaving Group command as war drew nearer, but reached the decision to leave after discussing the issue with GEN Schwarzkopf and LTG Michael F. Spigelmire (CG, USASOC):

**“Schwarzkopf initially was hesitant, but I was very fortunate I was able to get Gerry Dunbar over early and had been able to give him some visibility with the CINC and with the J-3. They were comfortable with him, and GEN Schwarzkopf finally concurred.”<sup>42</sup>**

With the PSYOP plan just approved, it was a sensible point for Dunbar to take command. According to MAJ James A. Treadwell, the 4th POG S-3, “When [Dunbar] took over, he already knew everything that was going on.”<sup>43</sup> The next month was spent arraying, equipping, and preparing PSYOP units and soldiers for the conflict headed their way on 17 January 1991.

## Conclusion

In the post-Vietnam era, PSYOP units were undermanned, equipment was dilapidated or non-existent, and training was negligible. However, the 1985 DoD Master Plan set in motion five years of gradual revitalization. In Operation JUST CAUSE, PSYOP forces implemented the new group- and battalion-level deployment model. In addition, the mission provided soldiers with a real-world learning experience. By the time Iraq invaded Kuwait and Operation DESERT SHIELD began in August 1990, PSYOP was on far better footing than it had been at any point in the previous fifteen years. That was the good news.

Conversely, PSYOP campaign plan approval processes were still subject to the cumbersome 1984 Overt Peacetime PSYOP Plan (OP3), which was ill-suited for the fast-moving crisis in the Middle East. A shadow of the original plan submitted by the JPOG, the final version of BURNING HAWK was not approved until nearly three months later in mid-December 1990. “Literally months were wasted,” according to LTC Jones

and MAJ Summe.<sup>44</sup> There was almost unanimous agreement after the war that theater CINCs should have the authority to approve at least a generic PSYOP plan, without having to wait on full JCS or SECDEF approval.<sup>45</sup> As COL Dunbar remarked, “You need a pre-hostility phase in [PSYOP] . . . You need to conduct a psychological preparation of the battlefield, and that means you do it before the war starts.” He held out hope that “if we do it over again, with what we know now, I don’t think we’d have that kind of delay getting the plan approved.”<sup>46</sup>

Notwithstanding this lag in approval, progress was made in the interim to prepare for a large-scale PSYOP

effort against Saddam Hussein’s forces in Kuwait and Iraq. Joint, interagency, and combined PSYOP coordination and planning, to include the formation of the Combined PSYOP Cell, helped fill the gap while BURNING HAWK languished in the Pentagon. More importantly, the period before the initiation of hostilities on 17 January 1991 witnessed the deployment of hundreds of soldiers and equipment from four active-duty PSYOP battalions, one USAR battalion, and multiple USAR companies, as well as pilots and crewmembers from the 193rd SOG. These PSYOP deployments during Operation DESERT SHIELD are the topic of a future article. 🔥

## Takeaways:

- 1 In a decrepit state after Vietnam, PSYOP forces made a gradual recovery in the 1980s, gained relevant experience in Panama, and were ready for war in the Persian Gulf.
- 2 TDYs to USCENTCOM before the invasion paid off for 8th POB soldiers during DESERT SHIELD by giving them experience, area familiarity, and the ability to make advanced arrangements for a greater PSYOP role.
- 3 OP3 was sufficient for peacetime PSYOP programs, but not for situations in which conflict was likely or imminent in the near-term.

## Endnotes

- 1 Department of Defense, DoD Directive S-3321.1, “Overt Psychological Operations Conducted by the Military Services in Peacetime and in Contingencies Short of Declared War,” 26 July 1984, copy in USASOC History Office, Fort Bragg, NC. *According to this policy, the Under Secretary of Defense for Policy (USD[P]) had authority to “review and approve all PSYOP programs to be conducted during peacetime or in contingencies short of declared war.” The Assistant Secretaries of State (ASDs) for International Security Affairs and International Security Policy, in coordination with the USD(P), would advise the JCS in the development of PSYOP programs related to their geographic areas of responsibility. The DoD General Counsel was to review all proposed PSYOP programs “in peacetime or during contingencies short of declared war.” The JCS was to review PSYOP plans submitted by Unified Commands, like USCENTCOM, “to determine whether they are adequate and feasible,” and “provide for the direction of PSYOP” (a vaguely worded function). And Unified Commands were to “plan, support, and conduct in peacetime and in contingencies short of declared war [PSYOP] in support of U.S. regional objectives, policies, interests, and theater military missions.”*
- 2 Alfred H. Paddock, Jr., “Psychological Operations, Special Operations, and U.S. Strategy,” in *Special Operations in U.S. Strategy*, ed. Frank R. Barnett, B. Hugh Tovar, and Richard H. Shultz (Washington, DC: National Defense University Press, 1984), 237.
- 3 COL (ret.) Anthony H. Normand, interview with Richard D. Stewart, 10 October 1991, Folder 957, Box ADA-1, USASOC History Office, Fort Bragg, NC, hereafter Normand interview, 10 October 1991.
- 4 Richard B. Davenport, “The Need for an Innovative Joint Psychological Warfare Force Structure,” *Joint Force Quarterly* 88 (January 2018), <https://ndupress.ndu.edu/publications/article/1412317/the-need-for-an-innovative-joint-psychological-warfare-force-structure>.
- 5 Alfred H. Paddock, Jr., “Military Psychological Operations,” in *Political Warfare and Psychological Operations: Rethinking the U.S. Approach*, ed. Carnes Lord and Frank R. Barnett (Washington, DC: National Defense University Press, 1989), 50
- 6 Government-produced country studies typically addressed the history, geography/topography, demographics, economics, and government of a given country. While valuable, they were quite dense, current only as of the publication date, and not always conducive for a short-notice deployment. COL Normand’s intent was for civilian analysts to create products that were more current; reflected recent events; and provided the immediate local or regional contexts, to include summaries of the information ‘landscape,’ in the areas to which PSYOP soldiers were deploying.
- 7 Normand interview, 10 October 1991.
- 8 Normand interview, 10 October 1991.
- 9 USACAPOC, “DESERT STORM Observations [JUST CAUSE],” n.d., Folder 235, Box 3-3B, USASOC History Office, Fort Bragg, NC.
- 10 1st SOCOM, “Kuwait/Iraq: War of Words,” n.d., Folder 966, Box ADA-1, USASOC History Office, Fort Bragg, NC, hereafter “War of Words”; Association of the United States Army, *The U.S. Army in Operation DESERT STORM: An Overview* (Arlington, VA: AUSA, 1991), 3.
- 11 *The U.S. Army in Operation DESERT STORM: An Overview*, 2-3; GulfLINK, “Operations Desert Shield/Desert Storm,” n.d., <https://gulflink.health.mil/timeline/index.html>, hereafter GulfLINK; ARSOTF, “ARSOTF Battle Journal; Operation DESERT Storm, 16 January 1991 – 4 March 1991,” n.d., TAB B, Folder 427, Box 4-1B, USASOC History Office, Fort Bragg, NC, hereafter “ARSOTF Battle Journal”; XVIII Airborne Corps to 101st Airborne Division et al., “SUBJECT: SPOT Report 18-33-90,” 19 August 1990, Folder 890, Box 17-5A, USASOC History Office, Fort Bragg, NC; USSOCOM, *Psychological Operations During Desert Shield/Storm: A Post-Operational Analysis* (MacDill AFB, FL: USSOCOM, 1993), 1-C-3, 1-C-5.
- 12 *Psychological Operations During Desert Shield/Storm: A Post-Operational Analysis*, 1-C-2; GulfLINK; *The U.S. Army in Operation DESERT STORM: An Overview*, 2-8. JFC was organized into JFC-North and JFC-East.
- 13 HQDA to USFORSCOM et al., “SUBJECT: Alert Order for Presidential Call-Up of Selected Reserve to Active Federal Duty,” 17 August 1990, Folder 963, Box ADA-1, USASOC History Office, Fort Bragg, NC; GulfLINK; *The U.S. Army in Operation DESERT STORM: An Overview*, 2, 8; *Psychological Operations During Desert Shield/Storm: A Post-Operational Analysis*, 1-C-4.
- 14 Global Security, “Joint Task Force Proven Force,” n.d., [https://www.globalsecurity.org/military/ops/proven\\_force.htm](https://www.globalsecurity.org/military/ops/proven_force.htm), hereafter “Joint Task Force Proven Force”; Jeffrey B. Jones and Jack N. Summe, “Psychological Operations in DESERT SHIELD, DESERT STORM, and URBAN FREEDOM,” *Institute of Land Warfare: Landpower Essay Series*, No. 97-3 (August 1997): 2, hereafter “PSYOP in DESERT SHIELD, DESERT STORM, and URBAN FREEDOM.” *JTF Proven Force had Air Force, Army, and Special Operations components.*
- 15 *Psychological Operations During Desert Shield/Storm: A Post-Operational Analysis*, 1-C-5-1-C-6.
- 16 “PSYOP in DESERT SHIELD, DESERT STORM, and URBAN FREEDOM.”
- 17 *Psychological Operations During Desert Shield/Storm: A Post-Operational Analysis*, 3-6, 1-C-2; “PSYOP in DESERT SHIELD, DESERT STORM, and URBAN FREEDOM,” 1.
- 18 8th POB, “SUBJECT: PSYOP Sitrep from Saudi Arabia #1,” 8 August 1990, Folder 958, Box ADA-1, USASOC History Office, Fort Bragg, NC, hereafter “Sitrep #1.”



- 19 "Sitrep #1."
- 20 8th POB, "SUBJECT: PSYOP Sitrep from Saudi Arabia #2," 9 August 1990, Folder 958, Box ADA-1, USASOC History Office, Fort Bragg, NC.
- 21 8th POB, "SUBJECT: PSYOP Sitrep from Saudi Arabia #3," 9 August 1990, Folder 958, Box ADA-1, USASOC History Office, Fort Bragg, NC.
- 22 8th POB, "SUBJECT: PSYOP Sitrep from Saudi Arabia #5," 14 August 1990, Folder 958, Box ADA-1, USASOC History Office, Fort Bragg, NC.
- 23 8th POB, "SUBJECT: PSYOP SITREP from Saudi Arabia #6," 15 August 1990, Folder 958, Box ADA-1, USASOC History Office, Fort Bragg, NC.
- 24 *Psychological Operations During Desert Shield/Storm: A Post-Operational Analysis*, 2-5; "PSYOP in DESERT SHIELD, DESERT STORM, and URBAN FREEDOM," 1; CDR, 4th POG, "SUBJECT: Informal PSYOP Update 10 Aug – 14 Sep 1990," 14 September 1990, Folder 101, Box 3-2B, USASOC History Office, Fort Bragg, NC, hereafter "Informal PSYOP Update 10 Aug – 14 Sep 1990." **This JPOG consisted of COL Normand; the 4th POG Deputy Commanding Officer (DCO) (LTC); a PSYOP Specialist (MAJ); PSYOP Specialist/Ops NCO (SSG); an Intelligence Officer and NCO (MAJ and SGT); an Administrative Officer/HQ Commandant (First Lieutenant [1LT]); an Administrative Specialist (SGT); Automation Operator (SPC); a civilian Automation Specialist (GS-11); and three civilian Analysts (GS-13, GS-12, GS-11). Per Normand's request, two PSYOP planners at USSOCOM were added as augmentees (COL and LTC).**
- 25 Institute for National Strategic Studies, National Defense University, *PSYOP at War: The Management of Strategic Information in Panama and the Persian Gulf* (Washington, DC: NDU, 1993), 14.
- 26 *Psychological Operations During Desert Shield/Storm: A Post-Operational Analysis*, 1-C-2; Normand interview, 10 October 1991; CDR, 4th POG, "SUBJECT: Informal PSYOP Update 10 Aug – 14 Sep 1990," 14 September 1990, Folder 101, Box 3-2B, USASOC History Office, Fort Bragg, NC, hereafter "Informal PSYOP Update 10 Aug – 14 Sep 1990." **A later USACAPOC Lessons Learned report criticized the exclusively active-duty makeup of the JPOG. It recommended the creation and employment of a CA and PSYOP Assessment Team (CAPOAT), led by a senior USACAPOC officer, to address theater-level requirements in the future.** USACAPOC, "DESERT STORM Observations [CAPOAT]," n.d., Folder 235, Box 3-3B, USASOC History Office, Fort Bragg, NC.
- 27 Normand interview, 10 October 1991. **The Wave effort will be addressed in a future article.**
- 28 *Psychological Operations During Desert Shield/Storm: A Post-Operational Analysis*, 2-5, 1-C-3; "Informal PSYOP Update 10 Aug – 14 Sep 1990."
- 29 "Informal PSYOP Update 10 Aug – 14 Sep 1990."
- 30 Tony Normand, "SUBJECT: Informal Update to PSYOP Community," 19 September 1990, Folder 264, Box 3-3B, USASOC History Office, Fort Bragg, NC.
- 31 *Psychological Operations During Desert Shield/Storm: A Post-Operational Analysis*, 1-C-3; "Roles and Missions of Special Operations in Desert Storm: An Initial Historical Summary," Folder 764, Box 5-2A, USASOC History Office, Fort Bragg, NC.
- 32 "PSYOP in DESERT SHIELD, DESERT STORM, and URBAN FREEDOM," 2.
- 33 *PSYOP at War*, 15.
- 34 "Roles and Missions of Special Operations in Desert Storm."
- 35 Normand interview, 10 October 1991.
- 36 "Roles and Missions of Special Operations in Desert Storm"; *Psychological Operations During Desert Shield/Storm: A Post-Operational Analysis*, 2-8, 1-C-4.
- 37 COL (ret.) Layton G. Dunbar, interview with Stanley Sandler, 1991, USASOC History Office, Fort Bragg, NC, hereafter Dunbar interview, 1991.
- 38 *Psychological Operations During Desert Shield/Storm: A Post-Operational Analysis*, 4-5.
- 39 *Psychological Operations During Desert Shield/Storm: A Post-Operational Analysis*, 2-9, 1-C-5; Normand interview, 10 October 1991; Richard W. Stewart, Information Paper, "VOLANT SOLO and DESERT STORM," n.d., 1-2, Folder 960, Box ADA-1, USASOC History Office, Fort Bragg, NC, hereafter "VOLANT SOLO and DESERT STORM"; "Roles and Missions of Special Operations in Desert Storm."
- 40 Dunbar interview, 1991.
- 41 Dunbar interview, 1991.
- 42 Normand interview, 10 October 1991.
- 43 COL (ret.) James A. Treadwell, interview with Jared M. Tracy, 25 February 2021, USASOC History Office Classified Files, Fort Bragg, NC, hereafter Treadwell interview, 25 February 2021.
- 44 "PSYOP in DESERT SHIELD, DESERT STORM, and URBAN FREEDOM," 8.
- 45 "PSYOP in DESERT SHIELD, DESERT STORM, and URBAN FREEDOM," 7.
- 46 Dunbar interview, 1991.