

8 INFORMATION WARFARE FLIGHT



MISSION

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8 Information Warfare Flight activated, May 2001

STATIONS

Barksdale AFB, LA

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EMBLEM

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OPERATIONS

2006 BARKSDALE AIR FORCE BASE, La. (AFPN) -- The hum of computer fans, the tapping of fingers on keyboards and the occasional ring of a telephone are all that are normally heard in this office. But don't let the quiet fool you -- the office staff is working to ensure that technological advances aren't being used against the Air Force. The 8th Information Warfare Flight has 26 members who work behind the scenes to apply strategies to technology for the Air Force's protection.

Information operations have always existed, said Capt. Joseph Silver, 8th IWF chief of training, but the unit is working to adapt these strategies to work with current technology. The three parts of information operations are influence operations, electronic warfare and network warfare. Influence operations fit into the Air Force's bigger picture, said Lt. Col. Mark Matsushima, 8th IWF commander. "It's about more than just dropping bombs. It's about affecting how the enemy acts, thinks and behaves," he said.

One aspect of influence operations is psychological operations. An example is dropping leaflets over a foreign country. The leaflets might list a radio frequency people can tune to for information about operations American servicemembers are conducting. Influence operations also includes military deception -- misleading adversaries so they misallocate or misuse resources to the Air Force's advantage. For example, World War II German commanders in occupied France misallocated ground, air and shoreline defenses before the Invasion of Normandy, having been misled by psychological and deception operations.

Captain Silver said it's important to synchronize military deception and psychological operations to make sure the U.S. retains its credibility. Another aspect of influence operations is operational security, or protecting critical information. This concerns such information as when and where aircrew members are located and when aircraft are launched. Foreign human intelligence agents may be looking for indicators, which is unclassified information that could be useful when combined with other indicators, Captain Silver said. "When all these harmless little tidbits are put together, you can see the big picture," the captain said.

Maj. Daniel Marcalus, 8th IWF director of operations, said that flight members are trained to recognize the big picture and how each little part can, by itself, be harmful. "We master and control information, but these are not new concepts. We are just using, refining and combining the tactics, techniques and procedures," the major said. Controlling information and other aspects of the operation give an advantage to American forces, Major Marcalus said. Also under influence operations is counterpropaganda operations, which is telling about a situation soon after it has happened. Captain Silver said it is important to get the American side of the story out soon, because the first release of information usually has the greatest effect.

The second part of information warfare is the electronic focus. One aspect of that is electronic attack, which is jamming or deceiving radars, radio frequencies, particle beams and other directed-energy weapons. Captain Silver said that by deceiving an enemy's radar, they may misallocate resources to an area where they believe an aircraft is headed instead of the correct location. Electronic warfare also includes electronic protection, which is countertactics and hardening, or securing, the avionics system by resisting jamming from adversaries. Electronic warfare support includes threat avoidance through route selection, targeting and homing. The three aspects of network warfare are attack, defense and support. Network warfare support includes finding, fixing tracking and assessing nodes and systems, which includes telephones,

computers, televisions and satellites.

Major Marcalus said that although the unit's job isn't fancy, a new focus on information operations as an Air Force warfighting area includes training unit members through time, resources and exercises. It takes about a year for an Airman to be completely trained to plan and implement information warfare, Colonel Matsushima said. "These are not simple concepts. It'd take too much (time) in order to explain all of this to someone who is fresh out of technical school," the major said. "You need to remember that we're bringing together concepts and techniques from thousands of years." Major Marcalus said that what's new about this type of warfighting is the way it is being used. "We bring a way to fight that an air and space operations center at Barksdale can have effects anywhere in the world," the major explained. "We bring operational tools to support (Strategic Command's) space and global strike mission." Captain Silver said the unit has a rather high operations tempo because they are training and traveling to support exercises. "It's all in the name of making the world a better place," Captain Silver said.

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Sources

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