SensusQ

From disinformation and 'doomscrolling' to intelligence collection

Social media has never been more lethal

This is the second in a series of articles in which we explore the development and application of Information Operations to achieve Information Advantage. In this edition we segue into exploring disinformation and provide a brief overview of some methodologies that have been developed to combat it. We also briefly outline some the changing nature of real time multi-source intelligence flows in operations and the capabilities that are required to fully exploit this intelligence. In the future we will publish a more in-depth analysis on these operations and attempt to assess their impact.

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"**A**s the Russian invasion of Ukraine continues to dominate global news, we have all become news junkies and become addicts to what is now known as 'Doomscrolling'. This involves navigating social media platforms and news sites for negative stories with our minds ultimately becoming numb to the torrent of information. Although Doomscrolling first appeared to come to prominence during the COVID pandemic, as nations slowly come out of lockdown, our acquired addiction to tragedy has been replaced by events in Ukraine.

More so than COVID, news from Kyiv comes directly to our screen from a multitude of sources, and sorting the information, misinformation, and disinformation is becoming increasingly difficult. To define these terms, information can be regarded as knowledge communicated or received concerning a particular fact or circumstance. Misinformation is incorrect information that may or may not be deliberately intended to deceive, with disinformation deliberately false to influence the policies or opinions of those who receive it.

For those without access to reliable, fully validated intelligence, the range of information sources leaves us exposed to misinformation. To prevent us from perpetuating falsehoods by promulgating false information, Fact Checking should become instinctive whenever we are exposed to new or significant information. To aid this process, Mike Caufield. Originally intended to help students to become better as sorting of truth from fiction, it is useful for anyone using digital media sources.

The first stage of the methodology is to STOP. The reader needs to examine the source and its reputation. If these are unknown following the next stages, it is also important not to get continually distracted away from the original story and its purpose. The second stage in the methodology is to INVESTIGATE the source. Knowing the expertise and any agenda of the author of the material is crucial to being able to interpret what is being said. The third stage is FIND better coverage. Whatever the source of the article, it is important to analyse the claim that is being made. If it is significant, are there other, better sources that are more trusted or provide better in-depth analysis? Finally, stories should be TRACED back to their original source. This will ensure that the background of the story is fully understood and has not been manipulated to suit a particular narrative.

Throughout the SIFT methodology, an underpinning theme should be to reconstruct the context in which it was written. This includes an examination of the author, their expertise

and reputation, and their record for accuracy. This will assist in providing an indication of any specific narrative they are promoting, whether intentional or not.

The SIFT methodology can have a useful application in modern all-domain operations with multiple information sources. By monitoring the situation prior to operations an understanding is established of the situation, sources, information, sentiment etc. During operations this history is available, which helps to investigate incoming information and find trustful confirmation from other sources which are already known. This intelligence must be rapidly assessed, fused, and exploited if it is to deliver operational advantage. In many cases it may be the difference between life and death.

In this regard, SensusQ's system can provide AI-enabled structured data processing and display capability. Using Machine Learning and Artificial Intelligence Algorithms to sort and process data, the user is presented with the information that they need at the time that it is required. Faced with multiple information sources with differing latencies and perhaps a range of reliabilities, SensusQ can assimilate all these factors to provide the Commander with the best possible situation awareness in near real time.

As the Russian campaign in Ukraine has migrated from what was presumably intended as swift operations to battle of attrition, so the role of disinformation has become more prominent. With Russian news

"As the ongoing war in Ukraine clearly demonstrates, during operations inteligence may flow from multiple sources that were not consider prior to the operation. "

organisations restricted in the west and popular social media applications blocked in Russia, Moscow's focus is on its domestic and select international audience. From the start of the campaign, Russia's narrative of 'de-nazifying' Ukraine was ridiculed as it was pointed out that President Volodymyr Zelensky is Jewish. Indeed, members of his family were murdered during the Holocaust, and others fought in the Red Army against Nazis. More recently, Moscow has played on the fears of its population by claiming that with US funding, Ukraine was developing nuclear and biological weapons to be targeted on Russia. Far-fetched as these narratives may be, they may be having the desired effect. Far from assuming that the war is universally unpopular in Russia, Putin's popularity may actually be increasing. Crowds protesting against the war have been relatively small, and there seems to be no significant opposition movement. It remains to be seen whether sanctions will undermine support for the war or increase the resolve of the nation.

Although the conflict of the future will retain many of the same attributes that it has always done, its pace and information flows will continue to increase. To be able to manage this data and determine which is reliable, assured, and accurate Commanders must be able to rely on having the latest and most efficient software support. SensusQ's system will provide that Information Advantage.