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Strategic Assessment: The Internet

Prepared by Mr. Charles Swett
Assistant for Strategic Assessment

Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Special Operations and
Low-Intensity Conflict
(Policy Planning)

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Note: The views expressed in this document are those of the author and do not necessarily represent the policies or positions of the Department of Defense.

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FAS Intro:

The following paper reviews the actual and potential impact of the Internet on domestic and foreign politics and international conflict, from the point of view of a U.S. Department of Defense analyst. It is presented here by the [Project on Government Secrecy](#) of the [Federation of American Scientists](#).

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STRATEGIC ASSESSMENT: THE INTERNET

Abstract

The political process is moving onto the Internet. Both within the United States and internationally, individuals, interest groups, and even nations are using the Internet to find each other, discuss the issues, and further their political goals. The Internet has also played an important role in recent conflicts. As a result, overseas segments of the Internet can be a useful tool for DoD, both for gathering and for disseminating information. By monitoring public message traffic and alternative news sources from around the world, early warning of impending significant developments could be developed, in advance of more traditional means of indications and warning. Commentary placed on the Internet by observers on the scene of low-intensity conflicts overseas could be useful to U.S. policymaking. During larger scale conflicts, when other conventional channels are disrupted, the Internet can be the only available means of communication into and out of the affected areas. Internet messages originating within regions under authoritarian control could provide other useful intelligence. Public messages conveying information about the intent of overseas groups prone to disrupting U.S. military operations can provide important counterintelligence. The Internet could also be used offensively as an additional medium in psychological operations campaigns and to help achieve unconventional warfare objectives. Used creatively as an integral asset, the Internet can facilitate many DoD operations and activities.

Background

In the last few years, the Internet has become a household word. After a long period of relative obscurity when it was solely the domain of technically oriented individuals, the Internet has burst onto the national scene and is playing an increasingly important role in an ever-widening spectrum of activities involving an exponentially increasing number of people. It is now in the mainstream. Having a tangible effect on in the social, cultural, economic, and political lives of millions, the evolution of the Internet is taking it into roles completely unanticipated by its original designers. Rather than merely "fitting in" to pre-existing social processes, the Internet is actually transforming the nature of the processes themselves.

The Internet has been increasingly involved in politics and international conflict. Local, state and national governments are establishing a presence on the Internet, both for disseminating information to the public and for receiving feedback from the public. Candidates for elective office are conducting debates over the Internet. Organizers of domestic and international political movements are using the Internet. It has played a key role in Desert Storm, the Tiananmen Square massacre, the attempted coup in Russia, the conflict in the former Yugoslavia, and in the challenge to authoritarian controls in Iran, China, and other oppressive states. The Internet is playing an increasingly significant role in international security, a role that is potentially important to DoD.

Objectives

The goals of this strategic assessment are to:

- Explain current general trends in the evolution of the Internet
- Analyze the role being played by the Internet in domestic and international politics and conflict
- Provide some relevant predictions about the future of the Internet
- Derive implications and recommendations for SO/LIC and for DoD in general.

Scope

The discussion in this assessment is non-technical. It is intended for audiences who are both familiar and unfamiliar with the Internet. Topics more relevant to social and commercial use of the Internet than to uses directly related to national security are provided in order to establish an appreciation for the broader importance of the Internet in the daily affairs of individuals and institutions, and its potential for reaching wide audiences.

What is the Internet?

The Internet is an enormous global network of computers. Often called a "network of networks," it integrates thousands of dissimilar computer networks worldwide through the use of technical standards that enable all types of systems to interoperate. Individuals connected to the Internet using their desktop computers can perform the following functions (depending on the sophistication of the "host," or local Internet node, to which they are connected for service):

- Exchange electronic mail, or e-mail, with any other user at any location
- Participate in offline (i.e., not current simultaneous) discussions via e-mail with large groups of individuals interested in particular topics, using "mailing lists" and "News Groups"
- Participate in online (i.e., real-time, or current) discussions with large groups of individuals using the "Internet Relay Chat" function
- Log on to remote computer sites worldwide using the Telnet function
- Download files from remote sites and users and upload files to remote sites and users via the FTP, or File Transfer Protocol, function (the files can be text, graphics, sound, or video)
- Read complex documents composed using "Hypertext" (clicking on a highlighted phrase on the screen takes the user into another domain, e.g., clicking on the word "Anthropology" creates a new screen or menu devoted to that subject), allowing hierarchial or "non-linear" structuring of documents. The components of a single hypertext document can be multiple files residing in host computers anywhere on the worldwide net; a standard protocol fetches the desired component from its home location and presents it transparently to the user, who is unaware of the underlying processes.
- Read "multimedia" documents, resident at "World Wide Web" sites, consisting of text, graphics, sound, and video, using an intelligent front-end program such as Mosaic.

There is no central authority managing the Internet. Participation is on a voluntary and cooperative basis, requiring only that technical standards be followed to establish a presence on the net. The Internet Society in Fairfax, Virginia plays an integrating role and sets technical standards. Funding for the communication links is provided partly by governments (e.g., the U.S. National Science Foundation has been funding the national

high-speed backbone) and partly by non-governmental institutions such as universities and corporations.

Although it is difficult to obtain accurate estimates, it is believed that currently there are approximately twenty million individuals worldwide with access to the Internet. Projections indicate that approximately one hundred million will have access by the year 2,000. The following factors are fueling this vast increase:

- User friendly - Improvements in technology, replacing arcane operating system commands understandable only by computer experts with user-friendly, icon-based, "point-and-click" interfaces, allowing non-technical individuals to become highly sophisticated users.
- Universal access - Proliferation of commercial Internet access providers offering online connections from virtually any location over telephone lines
- Lower cost - Substantial reductions in the cost of access, making it affordable by a large segment of the population
- Increased benefits - Large increases in the volume of information available over the Internet that is useful or entertaining
- Convenience - the ability for any individual to easily and inexpensively exchange e-mail with any other individual
- Cost-effectiveness - use of the Internet to realize low-cost improvements in business operations
- Momentum - Increases in the size of the net-wide audience attracting additional information providers and businesses seeking markets, causing a spiraling effect
- Prestige - Encouragement by the Clinton Administration Mystique

Bulletin Board Systems

A Bulletin Board System (BBS) is a personal computer running sophisticated but inexpensive software, to which people with their own computers can connect over a phone line. Generally available 24 hours a day, a BBS allows callers to read, reply to, and originate e-mail, read text files (bulletins), and exchange other kinds of files such as computer programs and graphics. Virtually anyone, including high school students, can set up and operate a BBS. International e-mail networks linking BBS's worldwide have developed, through which local callers can exchange messages with others of similar interests around the globe. There are roughly fifty thousand BBS's in the U.S., and the number is increasing rapidly.

A BBS generally has a specific theme, such as ham radio, fishing, religion, or computer games. Numerous BBS's have political themes. In the Washington area, there is a BBS run for the NRA providing anti-gun control information, a BBS for the "Christian Right," a BBS providing conservative critiques of alleged liberal bias in the news media ("AIM Net," for Accuracy in Media), BBS's supporting gay rights and women's rights, and various others. Anyone can write a manifesto or other political material and place it online using a BBS, making it available to a wide audience. BBS's are slowly connecting to the Internet. This trend is slow because most BBS's are run by individuals as a hobby at their own expense, and the cost of connecting a BBS to the Internet is still relatively high. However, even standalone BBS's have many of the same functions as the Internet, and their political role can be similar.

Current Trends

One important trend is the growth in the proportion of professionals having personal e-mail addresses on the Internet. Increasingly, business cards include not just voice and fax

phone numbers, but Internet addresses. This trend is so strong that many professionals now assume that their counterparts have an Internet address to which they can send e-mail. Rather than considering an Internet address to be a luxury, not having one is coming to be viewed as a handicap, comparable to not having a fax. Individuals and organizations without Internet access increasingly risk being left out of important discussions and processes taking place via the Internet.

The internal use of e-mail within organizations, by putting all personnel in direct contact with each other regardless of organizational rank, has tended to "flatten the pyramid," i.e., functionally change the organization to a certain extent from a hierarchical one to a horizontal one. There have been reports of this occurring even within a military organization. Along with the individuals who have Internet addresses comes their own expertise. Millions of experts in various fields, from medicine to plumbing, conduct business over the Internet and use it for recreation and information exchange, making available a vast potential storehouse of specialized knowledge. In the experience of the author, much of this knowledge is available for the asking.

Commercial online databases containing every form of information imaginable are now accessible (mostly for a fee) via the Internet. "Open source intelligence" originates largely from these databases. Public library catalogs, including the one belonging to the Library of Congress, are available for free over the Internet.

Increasingly, authors of magazine and newspaper articles include their Internet addresses in their bylines, allowing readers to contact them directly to provide their reactions or ask for additional information.

Federal, state, and local governments are establishing a presence on the Internet. Dozens of Federal agencies provide public information online. These agencies are all reachable through a service in Virginia called Fedlink. Fedlink acts as a gateway through which the general online public can reach any agency's system. The Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Public Affairs has just implemented a World Wide Web service containing current and historical news releases, daily summaries, press advisories, transcripts, and contracts. Information on this service flows one way, however, from DoD to callers. Provision has not been made to accept feedback from callers. OSD C3I is building its own "World Wide Web server," an Internet computer that provides graphics-based information publicly over the Internet. This server will provide OSD organizational information and an online version of the Early Bird.

Local governments are increasingly establishing "Freenets," which are online information services open to the public. These services provide local government documents and news, and are a medium for discussions among callers about local issues. Internet users interested in particular subjects participate in "conferences" devoted to those subjects. These conferences are collections of messages embodying extended discussions about those subjects. Currently, there are roughly ten thousand conferences available on the Internet in various forms. Conferences exist for virtually every subject known to man. On these conferences, one can find unique expertise, experience, information, and sources of advice unavailable elsewhere so conveniently and at such low cost. Some of the most energetic types of conferences are those devoted to current events and political debate. At any time, there is an enormous volume of discussion about the news of the day. Opinions span the entire political spectrum, from far left to far right, and originate in many nations. Whenever an important event occurs, such as a national election or a major conflict, even a natural disaster, there is an almost "deafening roar" of responses on the Internet. Participants in the international conferences include journalists, professors, political analysts, and politicians.

Internet conferences provide a unique medium for interpersonal communication on a massive scale.

"Usenet (one of the Internet's conferencing systems) is a place for conversation or publication, like a giant coffeehouse with a thousand rooms; it is also a worldwide digital version of the Speaker's Corner in London's Hyde Park, an unedited collection of letters to the editor, a floating flea market, a huge vanity publisher, and a coalition of every odd special-interest group in the world. It is a mass medium because any piece of information put onto the Net has a potential worldwide reach of millions."
[Rheingold]

Many of the issues addressed in these conferences focus on current military operations in which DoD is involved. Often, incorrect statements of fact, misrepresentations of the U.S. position, and gross distortions of situations are made, which is not surprising. However, the vast size of the audience for these misstatements amplifies the magnitude of their effect on public opinion.

In global terms, Americans are by far the heaviest users of the Internet, and the proportion of American homes with personal computers and modems is increasing quickly. Internet use in Europe is less prevalent but still significant, and is increasing rapidly. In the undeveloped world, particularly in some of the very nations where some future conflicts are likely to occur, few individuals other than government officials, business persons, educators, and some professionals have access to the Internet. However, all South American nations and about two-thirds of all African nations have at least some Internet connectivity." [Fineman] There is an international project whose goal is to spread the Internet to the undeveloped world, but progress is likely to be slow.

The threat from "hackers" and computer viruses is always present. Internet security is one of the greatest concerns of organizations using it, particularly the Department of Defense. Malicious tampering with government computers could seriously disrupt various operations if sufficient countermeasures are not built in. A strategy called "firewalls" has been developed, whereby a second computer (a firewall) is placed between an organization's own computer and the Internet communication lines, to help control access and prevent "break-ins." It has recently been found that even a triple firewall architecture has been successfully penetrated by hackers.

With respect to viruses, there is a kind of arms race spiral, whereby anti-virus software writers improve their software to protect against a newly discovered type of virus, the virus writers respond by creating a new virus that can circumvent that new protection, and so on.

The Internet and Domestic U.S. Politics

The Clinton Administration has embraced the Internet as a means of direct political communication with the electorate. Using the President's e-mail address, president@whitehouse.gov, anyone with access to the Internet can send a message to the President's staff. Some 5,000 e-mail messages come into the White House every week. Interns read every message, tally them by issue and by opinion expressed, and send a standard response. This is part of a relatively sophisticated political strategy:

"To a certain group of techno-literate staffers at the White House... the Net is not just a mechanism for receiving mail. It is emerging as a full-blown forum for conducting the country's political affairs. While the vast majority of the public gets its dose of political information from television and newspapers, the citizens of the Net are

plugged directly into their government. On a daily basis, subscribers to America Online, CompuServe, and Prodigy, as well as other denizens of the Internet can download and read a stack of new policy papers, speeches, and transcripts of conversations put out by dozens of departments within the Clinton Administration. In the past, only reporters and lobbyists saw these documents... White House staffers tend to view the Net as a ballast against the out-of-control mass media and Washington press corps. And they believe the public is sympathetic - that there is as much anger against the media as there is against government... By... establishing a growing presence on the Net, the Clinton administration is making a pitched effort to perform an end run around the media. Not surprisingly, the inside-the-beltway press corps does not like the idea of giving up its role as the filter through which the public sees its government. "[Schwartz]

The White House actually uses the content of all this e-mail:

"...e-mail is all neatly stored on the White House computer network where staffers can search by keywords such as 'health care,' 'crime,' 'Persian Gulf,' and so on. That enables staffers to instantly measure which issues are foremost on people's minds" [Schwartz]

They see interaction with the public via the Internet as a positive force:

"Jonathan 'Jock' Gill, a former Lotus Development Corp. manager who now works in the Office of Media Affairs, is heaped up about using technology to cut through the thick fog of cynicism in America. He believes that the Net can greatly expand the 'idea space' in which public discourse happens. Instead of watching a few talking heads on TV, citizens can sit at their computers and engage in two-way conversations with each other and with government officials....Gill's goal is to 'give everyone in government a name, a face, and a contact point.' The reason the public seems disconnected from government in recent years, he says, is that it has grown beyond the reach of the ordinary citizen.[Schwartz]

This direct, two-way interaction between the pinnacle of the Federal government and ordinary citizens is highly significant. The bypassing of congressional representation, the poll takers, and the news media tends to counteract any distortions or filtering that those entities might have otherwise added. This is probably the first time this phenomenon has occurred on any appreciable scale in the history of the nation. If it continues to grow over the long term, it can fundamentally alter the political process. However, future Administrations may not put so much emphasis on this mechanism.

It is not only the American public that uses the Internet to communicate with the White House. On February 4, 1994, Swedish Prime Minister Carl Bildt sent an e-mail message to President Clinton, the first head of state to do so:

"Dear Bill: Apart from testing this connection on the global Internet system, I want to congratulate you on your decision to end the trade embargo on Vietnam. I am planning to go to Vietnam in April and will certainly use the occasion to take up the question of the MIAs... Sweden is - as you know - one of the leading countries in the world in the field of telecommunications, and it is only appropriate that we should be among the first to use the Internet for political contacts and communications around the globe. Yours, Carl." [Schwartz]

Speaker of the House Newt Gingrich has established a program to make electronic versions of all draft legislation available on the Internet. This will allow the subset of the electorate who has Internet access to evaluate it for themselves, and will allow them to

make highly informed inputs to their representatives in Congress. It will also place those without access in a relatively weaker political position, because they will generally not be able to know the details or independently ascertain their significance. The theme of the Internet as a threat to the established mass media is a common one in the recent literature.

"The important trend,' messaged Michael Newman... on the WELL (an online information service), 'is technology abetting the grassroots distribution of information rather than the information being the domain of huge institutions to dole out according to their agendas. The "many-to-many" model is going to eat the "few-to-many" model alive.' (Newman) is right on the button. For generations, the leading newspapers have served as the nation's information gate-keepers, deciding which of the many millions of news stories will move through the gate and out into the country. Armed with relatively inexpensive technology, millions of Americans are now finding that they don't need the gatekeepers any more. For the first time, they're free to pick and choose their own stories and share their own responses. They tap into electronic wire services at will, call up expanded versions of news stories that interest them, then tell one another directly of their political aspirations or cultural passions. The bulletin boards not only carry news and forge communities, they shape values and public opinion without help from the gatekeepers - those who have always told us what information was important and what we should think about it. The shift in control is already evident in the journalistic confusion that results when talk radio and TV force Zoe Baird from a cabinet nomination or make a contender of Ross Perot, when a president ignores the White House press corps to communicate through town meetings... For journalists, such interaction (as occurs online) means surrendering control and sharing power, things that journalists are trained not to do. Although individual reporters struggle to hear from and respond to readers and viewers, journalism is not user-friendly. Its institutional structure is hostile to people who want to communicate with its practitioners or argue about its content. Reporters rarely answer directly to consumers and constituents in the way they expect politicians to. Most media organizations believe they know better than their constituents what's good and proper for them." [Katz]

"The importance of today's passive mass media is likely to diminish greatly over the coming decades. Passive media will be replaced by a new type of interactive multimedia, characterized by highly specialized media outlets often described as 'information agents. "' [Snider]

Many newspapers and magazines are timid about going online. Others, believing that they had better go online to retain their relevance, are finding for the first time in their entire history that they are subject to strong, serious criticism:

"In a media conference on CompuServe, AOL (America Online), (or) the Well, journalists are repeatedly challenged by non-journalists. People ask - and are told - how editing decisions were made, question why stories were left out, point out errors, disagree with conclusions... Time (magazine)'s online effort is intensely interactive, generating more than 2 million online visits in its first eight months. Editors and writers regularly make online appearances for drubbings by displeased readers who want to go a few rounds about gun control or women priests... Time's online message boards contain some of the most vigorous democratic debate on social issues in any modern medium... More importantly, users sense that Time, hardly a bastion of populist journalism, is changing as a result, becoming a bit less aloof, more in touch. It turns out that communicating with readers, like getting a needle, is scary, but it doesn't hurt all that much and is actually good for you." [Katz]

Another popular concept is "electronic democracy," whereby American citizens can become more influential participants in their government's decisions by making their views known via the Internet:

"'Electronic democracy' is inspired by two overlapping dislikes- of bureaucrats and of politicians - and by two ideas for making these groups more likeable. The first conjures up a world where the grumpy civil servant behind a counter is replaced by an easy-to-follow screen that makes all the government's information available at the touch of a button. The second idea wants to make politicians as answerable and accessible to their constituents as Pericles was to the tiny Athenian democracy."
[Economist]

"The promise is that the average citizen will provide more input and have a greater impact on the decisions of government. Through... electronic mail and bulletin boards, and instant feedback mechanisms, government officials can know more clearly what their constituents want... Instant knowledge of decision-makers' actions with the opportunity for instant feedback from angry constituents would necessitate backbone implants for many of our politicians before tough decisions get made."
[Varn]

Some advocates of electronic democracy envision online elections and referendums:

"Clearly, the new technology facilitates new forms of voting and thus direct participation. For example, instead of physically going to the polls, people could vote from their homes. With more-convenient and less-expensive voting, people could be expected to vote more frequently and on more issues. Ballot referendums and polls could proliferate." [Snider]

Other observers are more skeptical:

"We'll be in trouble if politicians cannot resist the movement to let people vote on individual issues electronically. Unless Americans can gain a lot more leisure, they just don't have time to do their homework. That's why we elect politicians to attend to our business. If we don't like the way they are doing their jobs, we toss them out of office. I'm skeptical of people who think the whole country could be run like the Internet. Voting on the creations of a new newsgroup isn't quite the same as voting on the death penalty or abortion laws. The effects are a little more permanent."
[Internet Unleashed]

Still others fear the potential for Big Brother types of control of the political process:

"Policy-makers... will ratchet up their sophistication in manipulating the perceptions of their actions. Data bases of information on constituents can be used to target information and manipulate opinions." [Varn]

"How do we know that our computer vote is secret? Perhaps it's stored on a disk alongside our name... A government or a civilian computer hacker might rewrite an election for money, political motives, or a lark." [Bacard] "The Net that is a marvelous lateral network can also be used as a kind of invisible yet inescapable cage. The idea of malevolent political leaders with their hands on the controls of a Net raises fear of a more direct assault on liberties." [Rheingold]

The Internet has already played an important role in several local elections. In these elections, the candidates were essentially forced online and put under the spotlight of determined questioning by voters. In another episode,

"...organizers on the Net don't need vast hordes to be effective. One of the first potent (cyber)tribes was gathered... by a software developer from Washington State. Browsing political (discussions) on the Internet... Richard Hartman last summer found an instant -and national - fellowship that shared his dislike for his congressman, the then-Speaker Tom Foley. Within weeks a "De-Foley-ate Congress" campaign had used the Net and commercial online services to find supporters and donors. Foley might have lost anyway, but news of Hartman's effort helped spread the notion of the Speaker's vulnerability -and brought help from national Republicans." [Fineman]

Many other political activists have discovered the utility of the Internet for sharing information and organizing their activities. For example,

"LatinoNet, a non-profit advocacy group based in San Francisco, has created a service on America Online to help Latino organizations cooperate and lobby government officials. The open service, called LatinoNet, was praised by Reed Hundt, the chairman of the Federal Communications Commission. With LatinoNet up and running, we may soon see additional networks for ethnic lobbyists, such as Serbo-CroatNet, SlovakNet or BelarusNet." [Washington Technology]

One activist has actually published advice for online political activists, in the form of ten "Rules," summarized below

- "Rule One: Decide what issues are worthy of your time."
 - "Rule Two: Don't automatically assume you must work within a traditional group."
 - "Rule Three: Be realistic about the possibility of payback."
 - "Rule Four: Know how to scout the Internet effectively - and where to post your own messages."
 - "Rule Five: Don't be intrusive or otherwise boorish."
 - "Rule Six: Write for the medium."
 - "Rule Seven: Tell the truth."
 - "Rule Eight: Turn flaming (insulting postings) to your advantage."
 - "Rule Nine: Provide a way for people to take action."
 - "Rule Ten: Don't forget to communicate with the media - and the policy makers."
- [Internet Unleashed]

The ability via the Internet to efficiently reach large numbers of individuals who are potential political actors plays to the strengths of special interest groups and political action committees. The Internet is thus highly attractive to activists who value a populist approach as opposed to a republican approach that emphasizes electing representatives and influencing their positions. Examples of online political activism abound:

"Even before NRA-ILA's Gun Talk (an electronic bulletin board system run by the National Rifle Association's Institute for Legislative Action) came online, the importance of rapid communication was illustrated last September, when word that Handgun Control, Inc., had scheduled 'Free the Brady Bill' press conferences was spread throughout the United States by pro-rights computer bulletin boards. Second Amendment activists worked feverishly over the weekend to mobilize our forces. In city after city, when the press conferences began, the anti-gun forces found themselves outnumbered by pro-rights citizens who had decided to attend a public event. In one city, the state senator who had volunteered to host the pro-Brady press conference observed the large crowd of pro-rights citizens and announced that he thought the Brady bill wouldn't do any good." [Kopel]

"When it looked as if the Colorado Springs city council was going to make a decision that would effectively prohibit telecommuting from his home in nearby Old Colorado

City, (David) Hughes went into action. 'The city planners of Colorado Springs decided to tighten the ordinance that regulates working out of the home,' Hughes recalls. 'I was the only person to stand up in front of the planning commission and testify against the ordinance; the planners tabled the matter for thirty days. I then brought the text of the ordinance home with me and put it on my BBS.' Hughes sent letters to the editors of his two local papers, inviting people to dial into his BBS and read the ordinance. Two hundred and fifty callers above the normal traffic level for his BBS called within the next ten days. What Hughes did not realize at the time was that many of those callers worked in large high-tech plants, and they downloaded, printed, copied, and circulated hundreds of copies of the ordinance throughout the city. At the next city council meeting, more than 175 citizens, representing every part of the political spectrum, showed up to protest the ordinance. It was defeated. Hughes pointed out that 'ordinarily, the effort needed to get involved with local politics is enormous. But the economy of effort that computers provided made it possible for me to mobilize opinion.' [Rheingold]

Another, somewhat startling, example, is a message posted on the Internet on December 16, 1994, calling for nationwide protests against the Republican Party's Contract with America. The message accuses the Contract with America of being, in effect, class war, race war, gender war, and generational war, and urges recipients to "mobilize thousands of demonstrations in local communities across the nation," "fill the jails by engaging in acts of civil disobedience," and engage in other disruptive actions (see Appendix A for the full text of the message). Yet another example is a message posted on the same date entitled, "Protest: GOP '96," which begins the process of organizing mass protests against the 1996 Republican National Convention in San Diego. The message states (see Appendix B for full text):

"With the GOP's historical opposition to women's equality, Lesbian & Gay civil rights, and freedom of choice, and with the party's support for Prop 187, insensitivity to environmental issues, and hawkish pro-war stances, the possibilities for expressing popular dissent against Republican policies are virtually endless. For that reason, a local committee is forming to help facilitate the largest number of protests and demonstrations for the broadest range of issues possible... Called Protest: GOP '96, the committee seeks to serve as a local point of contact for organizations from across the country intending to demonstrate during the GOP Convention in August of 1996."

Various fringe groups are beginning to exploit the Internet. These include:

- "[The National Alliance](#), a white supremacist organization that circulated a missive on the Internet last month exhorting people to oppose welfare mothers, homosexuals, Jews, illegal aliens and 'minority parasites'"
- "The Gay Agenda Resistance, 'dedicated to the struggle against the sexual deviancy forces,' tells users they can aid the anti-gay struggle 'by distributing our files far and wide through cyberspace'"
- "The [Michigan Militia Corps](#), a private group that is training to combat what it sees as an inevitable takeover by federal armed forces
- "The [National Association for the Reform of Marijuana Laws](#)"
- "[Earth First](#), a loosely affiliated group of environmental extremists"
- "[People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals](#), which is preparing an online foray to promote its militant approach to animal rights." [Sandberg]

According to the Wall Street Journal,

"Fringe groups are increasingly going online, gathering converts and seeking validation on the Internet. The network's far-flung links and low-cost communications are a boon to backwater groups that can't afford to use direct mail to make their pitches... The more a group is shut out of the mainstream, the more likely it is to go online... The Simon Wiesenthal Center, which monitors hate groups... has tracked about 250 hate groups in the U.S. and says 50 or more communicate online. Other experts believe the number is considerably higher." [Sandberg]

Still other kinds of interest groups have moved online. Groups of conspiracy theorists exchange e-mail explaining their often bizarre theories about conspiracies conducted by the U.S. government in general and DoD in particular. A much better organized group, the [Mutual UFO Network \(MUFON\)](#), has its own computer network with a gateway to the Internet. Much of the traffic on this network refers to U.S. military operations that members believe relate to investigations and cover-ups of UFO-related incidents, and other messages contain details on MUFON's efforts to conduct surveillance of DoD installations and to obtain information on UFOs that they believe exists in classified form.

The relatively more advanced role being played by the Internet in domestic U.S. politics provides a glimpse of what may happen in other nations in the future. Their different political systems, however, may change the precise nature of the Internet's role from what it is in the U.S., but its energizing effect is likely to be universal.

The Internet and International Political Activism

Numerous commentators and activists believe that the Internet will increasingly play a catalytic role in international affairs:

"We are moving into an era in which political decisions in a number of areas are going to become supra-national in character. And we are no longer going to be able to allow the intervention of the age-old doctrine of state sovereignty to interfere with certain imperatives... and I think the Internet, being the one great system that links all of the various information technologies and services around the world, is the likely theater - a great, global theater - in which many changes can be brought into being and new ideas can be exchanged... Right now I am very interested in using the Internet, and the technique of electronic petitioning, to strengthen the United Nations... I am also interested in developing a world court, not like the one that currently exists, but a world court of public opinion that people would have recourse to. You would, in effect, be taking an electronic poll throughout cyberspace and using that medium to assemble opinion and then publicize and propagate the results so that they would find their way into the other media around the world and be acknowledged as representing an important segment of world public opinion. In addition, I believe with the Internet we could build a kind of political early warning system. Back when we fought the Cold War, we had an early warning system, with sensors and monitors from one end of Canada to the other, warning us of the approach of missiles from the Soviet Union. *With the Internet, we could erect warning stations around the world, so that before a situation developed, like the one on Rwanda, we would know that trouble was brewing, that one tribe was threatening to annihilate another.*(emphasis added)" (former U.S. Presidential candidate John Anderson)[Long]

"...if the resources available on the Internet - the deeper sense of other people's lives and kinds of information that will be theirs to examine and explore - if these things work on and strengthen the imaginations of those who use them - well, then you have something that can have great significance for the cause of world peace.

Because, you see, a key to compassion and the urge to moral action is the ability to imagine someone else's life and circumstances and how it feels to be that person in those circumstances of war, famine, or imprisonment or political oppression." (Father Andrew Greeley) [Long]

"The advent of global networking is fragmenting and re-sorting society into what one author calls 'virtual communities.' Instead of being bound by location, groups of people can now meet in cyberspace, the noncorporeal world existing between two linked computers." [Cooke, Lehrer]

"Access to alternate forms of information and, most important, the power to reach others with your own alternatives to the official view of events, are, by their nature, political phenomena. Changes in forms and degrees of access to information are indicators of changes in forms and degrees of power among different groups. The reach of the Net, like the reach of television, extends to the urbanized parts of the entire world (and, increasingly, to far-flung but telecom-linked rural outposts). Not only can each node rebroadcast or originate content to the rest of the Net, but even the puniest computers can process that content in a variety of ways after it comes in to the home node from the Net and before it goes out again." [Rheingold]

"The development of communications technologies has vastly transformed the capacity of global civil society to build coalitions and networks. In times past, communication transaction clusters formed among nation-states, colonial empires, regional economies and alliances - for example, medieval Europe, the Arab World, China and Japan, West African kingdoms, the Caribbean slave and sugar economies. Today new and equally powerful forces have emerged on the world stage - the rain forest protection movement, the human rights movement, the campaign against the arms trade, alternative news agencies, and planetary computer networks." (quoted in [Rheingold])

The Internet has been playing an increasingly important role in international politics. One highly significant effect of Internet use overseas has been to circumvent the informational controls imposed by authoritarian regimes on their citizens:

"Undeniably, cyberspace has great subversive potential. The Internet gives individuals publishing power hitherto undreamed of. You can write a book, or a manifesto, and distribute it, free, to hundreds of thousands of people worldwide. In theory, all national censorship and control becomes obsolete, so long as telephone communication exists." [Jenkins]

This is more than just potential. In Asia, for example, according to the Wall Street Journal,

"The Internet is giving Asians a heady dose of free expression, providing a conduit for everything from racy pictures to heated political debate. In a region where controls on the press and other limits on freedom of expression are common, the global network of computer networks has become a platform for Asians to criticize their governments... an engineering student... in Thailand... says the Internet is filling a void. 'Since the Internet can offer unlimited access to the rest of the world from one's own living room, it is the only means so far to get around the government control...' And that access is apparently available to an ever- wider audience....the number of computers connected to the Internet (in Asia) rose 62% between January and July (1994), compared with 38% in the U.S. ...Asia now has more than 110,000 computers connected to the Internet." [Sandberg]

And elsewhere:

"Many people use computers to search for and bond with sympathetic 'neighbors.' For example, the Chinese students at Tiananmen Square and the Russian democrats during the Moscow coup used computer networks to communicate with kindred spirits around the world. The Chinese and Russian autocrats knew how to censor radio, TV, and the print media; however, they could not shut down the computer networks." [Bacard]

"Russians have added incentives for getting online: e-mail is a more dependable medium than either phone calls or faxes in their country, since error-correcting PC modems can usually deliver messages intact despite the hissing and crackling of poor telephone lines... As a result, electronic bulletin boards and commercial online services are sprouting regularly in Moscow, St. Petersburg, and other urban areas." [unattributed article]

"The Internet is the censor's biggest challenge and the tyrant's worst nightmare... Unbeknown to their governments, people in China, Iraq and Iran, among other countries, are freely communicating with people all over the world." [Rolling Stone]

"Authoritarian countries are hesitating before allowing their people access to this technology. I know it is being discussed at the highest levels in Vietnam. Government officials are nervous that people are going to use the Internet to push certain programs and issues and values that the Vietnamese government, which wants to stay in charge, doesn't want.." [Long]

In addition, the Internet has played an important role in recent and ongoing conflicts. For example:

"During the siege of Sarajevo, the war-torn citizens of that city were prisoners in their own homes. They risked their lives just to buy food or find fuel to heat their apartments. They also were isolated: phone calls didn't go through; letters went undelivered. But a lucky few found another way to send messages to their families and friends. With one computer and a single phone line, more than 150 people were able to send electronic mail out of Sarajevo in one three-month period." [Long]

"I was told by an acquaintance in Moscow about how he was picked up by the police on the day of the attack on their Parliament in December, 1991. It was a time of chaos, and apparently the police were using this as an excuse - this man was a left-wing dissident not looked on too kindly by the people in power. (He had organized something called the Labor Party and had been elected to the Moscow City Council.) He and some others were taken to a local police station and beaten up badly. A prisoner - a racketeer - who was about to be let out, wanted to help them and asked them for the phone numbers of their families. After his release, the racketeer contacted their wives, who then contacted an organization with an Internet connection. The organization put a message, a call for help, out on the Internet. In no time phone calls started coming in - people calling from places like Japan - saying, 'We hear you have so-and-so in jail, and we are worried about him,' and shortly thereafter, the men were released and the police apologized to them. This man says the Internet saved his life." [Long]

(Excerpt from Internet e-mail originating in Moscow during the attempted coup) "I've seen the tanks with my own eyes. I hope we'll be able to communicate during the next few days. Communists cannot rape the Mother Russia once again!... Don't worry, we're ok, though frightened and angry. Moscow is full of tanks and military machines - I hate them. They try to close all mass media, they stopped CNN an hour ago, and Soviet TV transmits opera and old movies... Now we transmit information enough to

put us in prison for the rest of our life... maybe you'd write me what do they say on your (American) TV about the situation, as we can't watch CNN now... You can't even imagine how grateful we are for your help and support during this terrible time! The best thing is to know that we aren't alone... Don't worry; the only danger for us is if they catch and arrest us, as we are sitting at home and distributing all the information we have... Thanks Heaven, these cretins (KGB) don't consider us mass media! Please stop flooding the only narrow channel with bogus messages with silly questions. Note that it's neither a toy nor a means to reach your relatives or friends. We need the bandwidth to help organize the resistance (emphasis added). Really good news. Right now we're listening to Radio Russia (without any jamming); they told that the eight left Moscow, no one knows where..." [Press]

"During the coup in Moscow, the information posted to (the Internet) was used by Voice of America and [CNN](#) and (indirectly) by some other Western broadcasters and newspapers." [Rheingold]

"During the Gulf War, we on the [WELL](#) (an online information service) were spellbound readers of reports relayed via (Internet) by an Israeli researcher, who was in a sealed room with his family, under missile attack. We asked him questions in the WELL's many-to-many public conference, that were sent to him, and his answers returned, via Internet e-mail." [Rheingold]

"IRC (Internet Relay Chat) stepped into the limelight in early 1991, due to the Persian Gulf War. During the bombing of Iraq, hundreds of users from all over the world gathered on a single channel for live reports from users logged in from the Middle East." [Internet Unleashed]

"Kat's bulletins, which he calls 'Zagreb diary,' don't appear in Yugoslav papers or on television. They exist in cyberspace. Kat types them on his own computer in Zagreb and sends them by modem to an electronic bulletin board in Germany. From there, his stories are relayed to computers around the world via the global mega-information stream called the Internet. 'Electronic mail is the only link between me and the outside world,' says Kat, writing by e-mail. The Croatian government owns all the major media in the country and is prosecuting a group of journalists for treason." [Cooke and Lehrer]

"'During Tiananmen Square, students were getting the news out and were fundraising through Internet,' (said) Tom Mandel... 'There were a bunch of us hungrily reading newsgroups, stuff we weren't getting from reporters.'" [Cooke and Lehrer]

A very significant use of the Internet is by international protest groups and political activists:

"Protest groups opposing regimes from Uruguay to the Philippines are plugging in their computers and planning their political resistance. Trade unions and charities in the industrialized world are keen to give computer equipment to groups elsewhere. If an impoverished group can persuade a better-funded organization to donate a modem to connect to the phone and can obtain a reliable phone line - often the most difficult part - it can make contact with millions of people worldwide via international computer networks. This can make governments nervous. Some African regimes are unhappy that a few unions seem to be using more advanced technology than they are. In India, a modem cannot be connected to a phone line without official permission." [Holderness]

One example of this phenomenon in Europe is an Internet mailing list (e-mail-based conference) called "Counterev-L:"

"This list is under the aegis of l'Alliance Monarchists, affiliated with l'Alliance pour la Maintenance de la France en Europe, and is dedicated to promoting the cause of traditional monarchy and counterrevolution. Its principles are a government based on natural law, decentralization, subsidiarity, an economy based on the principles of distributive justice, and the defense of traditional Western values." [Maxwell and Grycz]

Another example in Europe is the use of "electronic mailboxes" (i.e., BBS's) by neo-Nazi groups in Germany:

"In addition to events in which neo-Nazis are physically present, there is Right-wing extremist communication by means of electronic mail. It is not uncommon for neo-Nazis to maintain their own computer mailbox or to know a fellow extremist who does. With a standard personal computer and a telephone modem, anyone can connect to a neo-Nazi national network that contains eight mailboxes. Currently about 100 right-wing extremists frequently use the box... The neo-Nazis use electronic links to update developments within the right-wing extremist scene. The mailboxes are used to transmit propaganda, notify sympathizers of sites where rallies and social gatherings will take place, and review books and articles focusing on neo-Nazi politics and topics of interest such as immigration... German officials have cited potential abuses of this electronic network of race hatred. Coded messages could be transmitted promoting or coordinating illegal violent activity. The Vice President of the Bavarian State Office for the Protection of the Constitution said, 'The planning time for extremist operations might be shortened to a period that would make it impossible for us to intervene (before the attack).' [U.S. Army]

Yet another example is the use of computer networks by a Mexican underground group:

"...Subcomandante Marco of the Zapatista National Liberation Army (EZLN) in Mexico utilizes a portable laptop computer to issue orders to other EZLN units via a modem, and to foreign media contacts in order to maintain a favorable international propaganda image. Increasingly, an insurgent or drug trafficking group's access to and utilization of electronic media technology for exploiting the information superhighway will bolster their support networks and enhance their command and control." [U.S. Army]

"According to federal legislator Adolfo Zinser, who met with Marcos at a jungle hideout last year, the rebel leader typically would write his voluminous communiques on a laptop computer, which he carried in a backpack and plugged into the lighter socket of an old pickup truck he used when traveling between the remote Zapatista strongholds of La Garrucha and Guadalupe Tepeyac... Marcos' communiques continue to flow unimpeded through cyberspace, usually reaching readers in countries as distant as Italy, Germany and Russia faster than they can be published by most Mexican newspapers... If Marcos is equipped with a telephone modem and a cellular phone, it would be possible for him to hook into the Internet even while on the run... [Robberson]

Apparently, the Zapatistas have attempted to use the Internet to deceive:

"Critics charge that the Internet is being used by the Zapatista supporters to distort recent events. When the army began mobilizing, for example, word went out on the Internet that San Cristobal was surrounded by tanks and armored cars. While it was

true that the army presence had increased throughout Chiapas, no tanks were to be found anywhere in the state. One user group here sent out a report that airborne bombardments were underway in several named mountain villages and urged an international protest. They passed on rebel assertions that women were being raped and children killed. But reporters who visited those areas and interviewed scores of witnesses said they were unable to confirm even one such incident."[Robberson] (Note: see Appendix D for full text of message)

Elsewhere in Latin America, the Internet has actually been used by national governments as a tool of statecraft:

"In the battle over the Ecuadorian border, both Ecuador and Peru have been launching verbal missiles at each other via the World Wide Web"[Washington Technology] (Note: the World Wide Web is an Internet function that provides graphics as well as text to callers)

The largest and most active international political groups using the Internet appear to be the San Francisco-based [Institute for Global Communications \(IGC\)](#) and the [Association for Progressive Communications \(APC\)](#). As such, a review of the IGC can provide a good perspective on the breadth of DoD-relevant information available on the Internet. According to a text file placed on the IGC's publicly accessible Internet site

"IGC provides computer networking tools for international communication and information exchange. IGC is the U.S. member of the Association for Progressive Communications (APC), a coalition of computer networks providing services to over 25,000 activists and organizations in more than 130 countries. The IGC networks - PeaceNet, EcoNet, ConflictNet and LaborNet - together with APC partner networks, comprise the world's only computer communications system dedicated solely to environmental preservation, peace, and human rights. New technologies are helping these worldwide communities cooperate more effectively and efficiently... Send and receive private messages to and from more than 18,000 international peace, environmental and conflict resolution users on our affiliated networks or to millions of users on virtually any other network...Private conferences can be set up to facilitate internal group decision-making, task-sharing processes, or sensitive communications... APC is the most extensive global computer network... dedicated specifically to serving non-governmental organizations (NGOS) and citizen activists working for social change."

Although IGC/APC is clearly a left-wing political organization, without actually joining IGC and reading its message traffic, it is difficult to assess the nature and extent of its members' actual real-world activities. Some of its conferences, however, address the following subjects:

- "Lists of companies and/or products to be considered for a boycott due to unsound practices of the company, or unsound impacts of the product."
- "State security activities, surveillance, tapping
- "...articles from 'Forward Motion,' a magazine of socialist ideas and action which seeks to promote dialogue among grass-roots activists, build the working class as a force for social change, and challenge white supremacy and national oppression."
- "The Left List... a discussion forum dedicated to bringing together activists organizing for fundamental social change and creating a common meeting ground for electronic discussion, debate and collaboration."
- "To aid in the planning and execution of campaigns to end the nuclear weapons era."

- "Information relevant to the campaign opposing U.S. military bases in Australia and the Asian-Pacific region."
- "News, announcements and information from War Resisters International, on all aspects of anti-militarist and nonviolent action worldwide."
- "Information and discussion regarding the anarchist and anti-authoritarian movement and non-hierarchical organizing."
- "Monitoring activities of the extreme right."
- "...discussion related to the future of socialism, Marxism, or other non-exploitative forms of economic relations..."
- "...a multicultural, multi-racial news conference for the politically progressive. The conference also serves as a conduit for information from other Left Wing Sources."

There are also "alternative news sources" emerging overseas, that can play a significant, if slanted, role in filling gaps left by the reports issued by the mainstream news media. The most extensive set of alternative news networks appears to be operated by the IGC.

According to an IGC document (Appendix):

"IGC News Service gathers and distributes alternative news and information to clients in the United States and abroad through a global network of distributed computers... IGC News Service is part of a worldwide network connecting primarily non-governmental organizations, alternative press and community broadcasters and is dedicated to the free flow of information, human rights and environmental preservation. IGC's regional and issue-oriented conferences serve as a repository for news, analysis, *calls for action* (emphasis added) and networking activities about that issue or region."

IGC's General News Services Include:

- Inter Press Service - "the backbone of IGC's news service. IPS is the Third World's largest news agency. Founded in 1964, IPS is a non-profit cooperative and is ranked by UNESCO as the world's fifth largest news agency based on its number of clients. IPS has more than 900 media outlets around the world. With 200 journalists... IPS distributes about 200,000 words daily in eleven languages from its headquarters in Rome and regional centers in Costa Rica, Philippines, Jamaica, Zimbabwe, Netherlands and the United Nations.

Pacific News Service, San Francisco

New Liberation News Service - "an independent, youth-oriented, progressive wire."

People's News Agency

Peace Media Service - "an independent foundation based in Holland, provides news and articles about movements and people seeking to build a just society through nonviolent methods."

Third World Network Features

Crossroads - "...published by the Institute for Social and Economic Studies as part of its work to promote dialogue and building new alliances among progressives and leftists. Its goals are to... bring diverse Marxist and socialist traditions to bear while exploring new strategies and directions for the progressive political movements and to highlight the centrality of anti-racist politics and the movements of people of color to the process of social change..."

- Green Left Weekly

IGC's region-specific news services include:

Latin America

- Report on the Americas
- Central America Update
- Proceso, El Rescate (El Salvador)
- Nicanet Weekly News Update (Nicaragua)
- Enfoprensa Weekly News Report, Noticias De Guatemala (Guatemala)
- Hondunet (Honduras)
- Agen (Brazil)
- The Caribbean
- Haiti Bulletin - "published clandestinely from Port Au Prince"

Africa

- Africa Information Afrique, South Scan News Service (Southern Africa)
- South Africa Watch, South Africa Political Update
- Somalia News Update
- Info-Zaire

Middle East

- Leb-Net Digest (Lebanon)
- Challenge - "a Jerusalem-based bimonthly English-language magazine written by Israelis, Palestinians and internationals... which reflects the diversity of opinions on the Israeli left."
- The Other Front - "...a weekly review of the Israeli press... focusing on the peace camp, the Right, and the center of the political spectrum."

Eastern Europe

- Kas-Kor Digest - "...a monthly publication covering labor related news in the former Soviet Union, including the most important news about the economic and political situations in the various republics."
- Bosnet (Bosnia and Hercegovina)
- Cro-News (Croatia)
- Mak-News (Macedonia)
- Serbian News Network

Asia

- China News Digest
- Pacific Rim
- South Pacific Associated News Service, Australia

Some Predictions

The following predictions are offered by the author, covering the next five to twenty years:

New Political Parties Operating Though the Internet will Emerge The convergence of large numbers of people of similar political persuasion through the Internet eventually will cause the development of political blocs, or parties, whose only means of interaction is through the Internet. Virtual conventions will be held over the Internet, where party platforms are agreed upon, and candidates for office are determined by vote. These activists will then interface with the "physical" world by running for elective office,

representing an electronic constituency. Virtual political parties of every type will be ad-hoc and may not be institutionalized for long periods of time like conventional parties; they may be orientated toward single issues or just a few issues, and thus they may dissolve once the issues are resolved to their satisfaction. They will also not recognize any political or geographic boundaries. Electronic parties will transcend local, state, and even national borders. Membership in and activism on behalf of these parties will occur on a global scale. They will increasingly make their presence felt in the internal political affairs of nations and in international affairs. The proliferation of these parties will also make the political scene much more complex, and multiple simultaneous political wars will occur in cyberspace. Due to the almost instantaneous transmission of news about current events to members and the very rapid development of responses to them via e-mail, these parties will be able to react almost immediately to developments that relate to their interests. This reactive speed will afford them a degree of influence that is disproportionately strong relative to their actual numbers.

Although it will be essentially impossible to enforce party discipline in these semi-formal, loosely defined organizations, considerable political momentum will be achieved when large numbers of members support particular positions. Single-issue coalitions between different parties with common interests will add to their potency. Financing would also be problematic, since members may be reluctant to transmit funds to a virtual "treasurer" for a party that might go out of existence without warning. However, these parties will have modest financial requirements compared to current conventional political parties, since most of their operations will occur over the Internet. The only significant costs will be incurred by activities through which party leaders interface with the "real world" of Congress and the White House. Lobbying, advertising, membership drives, polling, and most other party activities will occur almost exclusively on the Internet at almost negligible financial cost.

Political groups whose operations are coordinated through the Internet will be vulnerable to having their operations disrupted by false messages inserted by opposing groups. This will encourage the proliferation of encrypted messages. However, these groups will face the dilemma that encrypting their messages excludes the wider audience, from which they hope to elicit sympathy and support.

The monopoly of the traditional mass media will erode. No longer will the news editors and anchorpersons of television networks and newspapers solely determine what the mass audience learns and thinks about current events. Raw news reports from local, national, and international news wires and alternative news sources, and from unaffiliated individual observers on the scene of events acting alone, will be accessible by all Internet users. The filtering and slanting of the news currently performed by traditional media will give way to some extent to direct consumption of un-analyzed information by the mass audience, diminishing the influence now enjoyed by those media. An increasingly skeptical audience will be able to compare raw news reports with the pre-digested, incomplete, out-of-context, and sometimes biased renditions offered by television and newspapers. Some of the mass media will attempt to reassert their traditional roles on the Internet, and they will fail, because they will not have any advantage over their audience. Another consequence of this is that the average consumer of news on the Internet will have a much wider cognizance of current developments worldwide than currently, and will be more likely to have an opinion on overseas situations. This is not to say that the traditional mass media will lose their audience and become insignificant. They will continue to play a major role in the national news flow. However, they will lose considerable ground to alternative sources and alternative interpretations circulating on the Internet.

Members of Congress and Federal Agency officials will be inexorably drawn into the Internet. When members of Congress who do not currently have a presence on the Internet realize that other members (who may be political competitors or enemies) do have a presence on the Internet, they will want to join themselves. Particularly when they understand that they are being attacked in the electronic political debates and there is no one in cyberspace to defend them, or even worse, that they are not being discussed at all, they will not be able to avoid joining. Remaining out of the Internet will increasingly be recognized as a strategic weakness and a sign of being behind the times. The same phenomenon will affect officials in the Executive Branch of the Federal Government. Increasing demands for public accountability will draw them into the Internet too, beyond simply posting news releases and other documentation online. Members of Congress and senior Federal officials will require staffs just to monitor and respond to the traffic.

Text-oriented e-mail will be replaced by video/audio messages. As a result of reductions in the size and cost of high quality video cameras and improvements in video data compression technology, all personal computers in the future will be equipped with small video cameras, much as each computer today has a mouse. At the same time, the capacity of the communication links connecting personal computers to the Internet will greatly expand, due to replacement of twisted-pair copper telephone wires with fiber optic cables. These two trends will allow Internet users to compose messages consisting of compressed full-motion color video images of themselves speaking. When a user wants to send a message, he or she will first prepare a script and then speak the words for the camera while reading them from the computer screen like a teleprompter. The resulting data file will then be uploaded into the Internet and played back by all recipients using standard video playback hardware/software with which all computers will be equipped. Although some users will prefer the anonymity of text-oriented e-mail, many others will find the urge to let the world see what they look like and hear what they sound like irresistible. The addition of the visual and audio dimensions to computer-mediated communications will greatly expand the content of messages, since facial expression, tone of voice, body language, race, nationality, gender, and age all convey much information that is lost when flat text is used. Even today, a type of sign language has evolved in e-mail that attempts to make up for this. For example, the icon ;-) when viewed by tilting one's head to the left, resembles a face winking and smiling; the symbol is used to connote "grin," a good-natured addition to signify that the message is sent in friendship, even if it is critical or sarcastic. When this iconography is replaced by full-motion color video with sound, the emotional impact and intensity of political debate on the-Internet will be greatly magnified.

Politically oriented groups will realize the propaganda potential of video on the Internet, and will produce and disseminate video clips supporting their point of view. Internet users will have available to them a wide variety of political advertisements in the form of video files. Opposing groups will engage in video propaganda wars entirely within the Internet medium.

The Internet will be used as a tool of statecraft by national governments. The use of the World Wide Web portion of the Internet by the Peruvian and Ecuadorian governments is highly significant. Those nations, not renowned for their technological sophistication, have been the first to bring international diplomacy officially into the online world. Although many governments currently have an official presence on the Internet, they provide only standard embassy-type public affairs statements, with information about their populations, cultures, industries, and businesses. In the future, as more governments recognize the strategic value of this new medium for conveying their message, they will use it as an additional tool in the political process. That is, the current type of information placed on the Internet by official government organizations will be supplemented with

politically-oriented material conveying argumentation favorable to their respective positions on issues important to them. When one country involved in a dispute with others begins to use the Internet in this way, and the other countries become aware of this, a catalytic effect will occur, whereby all involved countries enter into the electronic debate in an official way.

The Internet will play an increasingly significant role in international conflict. Political discussions among the members of the online public at large, and real-world activities of national leaders, representatives of electronic political parties and interest groups, world bodies such as the U.N., commercial enterprises, and individual political activists, will be energized by the Internet. Current information about conflicts placed on the Internet in real time by on-the-scene observers and alternative news sources will be voraciously devoured by the world audience and will have an immediate and tangible impact on the course of events. Video footage of military operations will be captured by inexpensive, hand-held digital video cameras operated by local individuals, transformed unedited into data files, and then uploaded into the global information flow, reaching millions of people in a matter of minutes. Public opinion and calls for action (or calls to terminate actions) may be formed before national leaders have a chance to develop positions or to react to developments. These factors will greatly add to the burden on military commanders, whose actions will be subjected to an unprecedented degree of scrutiny.

Assessment

Political Roles

While there is already a great deal of political use of the Internet domestically and internationally, there is likely to be a significant increase in the scale and sophistication of such use in the coming years. Due to the differences in concentration of Internet use between different areas of the world, the impact of the Internet in directly influencing public opinion is likely to be heaviest in the U.S., less in other parts of the developed world such as Europe, and still less in the undeveloped world. Individual activists operating in less-developed countries, though, are likely to bring the Internet with them in the form of laptop computers that can access the Internet through any telephone line. Information brought into those countries through the small numbers of Internet access points can be spread locally through more traditional methods such as print, radio broadcast, and word of mouth. The activists will also be able to use the Internet to disseminate information to the rest of the world and to help coordinate their activities.

The Internet is clearly a significant long term strategic threat to authoritarian regimes, one that they will be unable to counter effectively. News from the outside world brought by the Internet into nations subjugated by such regimes will clash with the distorted versions provided by their governments, eroding the credibility of their positions and encouraging unrest. "Personal" contact between people living under such governments and people living in the free world, conducted via e-mail, will also help achieve a more accurate understanding on both ends and further undermine authoritarian controls. Information about violations of human rights and other forms of oppression will be increasingly conveyed to the outside world by the Internet, helping mobilize external political forces on behalf of the oppressed. It is thought by some analysts that the concepts of "national sovereignty" and "nation state" are becoming less relevant due to greatly increased economic, political, and cultural linkages that cut across national boundaries. To the extent that this is true, the Internet will play an important role, since it is the medium through which an increasing volume of these types of linkages will take place.

Intelligence

The Internet is a potentially lucrative source of intelligence useful to DoD. This intelligence can include:

- Reports on current events
- Analytic assessments by politically astute observers on or near the scene of those events, many of whom offer unique insights
- Information about the plans and operations of politically active groups.

John Anderson's concept for using the Internet to provide early warning of impending security threats has a great deal of merit. Internet message traffic about developing situations tends to precede news and intelligence reporting, since the individuals who originate that traffic are not constrained by the resource limitations to which news and intelligence organizations are subject. Those organizations must prioritize their efforts, focusing on what appears to be the most important items of the moment. Individual observers overseas who have access to the Internet can write about anything that interests them. It is likely that routine monitoring of messages originating in other countries would help provide strategic warning of developing security threats that would be of concern to the United States.

At the same time, it should be noted that a great deal of the message traffic on the Internet is idle chit-chat with no intelligence value whatsoever, a veritable "Tower of Babel." Monitoring of that traffic would need to be supported by automated filters that pass through for human analysis only those messages that satisfy certain relevance criteria. It is also important to note that the accuracy of much of the information on the Internet would be suspect: "Information and disinformation about breaking events are pretty raw on the Net. That's the point. You don't know what to think of any particular bit of information, how to gauge its credibility... You never really know how to gauge the credibility of the nightly news or the morning paper, either..."[Rheingold]

Thus new means of validating information received in this way would be needed. Alternatively, news reports on the Internet could be used to cue higher confidence means of U.S. intelligence collection, by alerting us to potentially important factors and allowing us to orient and focus our collection more precisely.

Beside being used to develop early warning of developing conflicts or the beginnings of new global trends or "sea changes," the Internet can be used at the opposite end of the spectrum: to obtain pinpoint information about specific matters of interest. Networks of human sources with access to the Internet could be developed in areas of security concern to the U.S., and these sources could be oriented to seek specific needed information. If constructed and managed correctly, such a system could be much more responsive and efficient than the current complex, unwieldy intelligence tasking and collection processes we must use. We might even consider cultivating the capability to perform strategic reconnaissance "by modem." This approach could never replace official DoD intelligence collection systems or services, but could be a useful adjunct.

The Internet can also serve counterintelligence purposes. For example, a message posted recently in an Internet discussion group for left-wing political activists repeated for their benefit an Associated Press article about an upcoming U.S. Army Special Operations Command training exercise directed at the (empty) St. Moritz Hotel in Miami Beach (see Appendix C).

If it became widely known that DoD were monitoring Internet traffic for intelligence or counterintelligence purposes, individuals with personal agendas or political purposes in mind, or who enjoy playing pranks, would deliberately enter false or misleading messages. Our analysis function would need to account for this.

Support to Policy Making

Beyond intelligence, the insights and analyses of thoughtful overseas observers such as educators, former politicians, local journalists and officials of other governments could be very useful to U.S. policy making. E-mail discussions about the likely consequences of various policy approaches to security problems could help improve the quality of U.S. policy making. A great deal of "brain power" exists on the Internet, and if it could be harnessed and channeled for productive purposes, it might be a useful addition to DoD's informational and political assets. Any such use, of course, would have to be protected by appropriate security measures.

Support to Civil Affairs Programs

The Internet has substantial value to the Civil Affairs community in helping to establish contacts and closer working relationships with non-governmental organizations. In pursuit of the goal of minimizing the U.S. government's role in executing civil sector programs in favor of a stronger role by non-military organizations, the Internet can be used to accelerate and strengthen activities among all parties. In addition, a project is underway to identify public online information bases accessible through the Internet that contain data useful to Civil Affairs programs. A substantial volume of relevant information has been found.

Offensive Uses

Just as the U.S. could be vulnerable to disinformational e-mail, politically active groups using the Internet could be vulnerable to deceptive messages introduced by hostile persons or groups. Far-right groups and far-left groups tend to watch each other, and it is likely that "moles" will obtain access to the other camps' networks for the purpose of disrupting their operations. This would tend to weaken the protection afforded by coding or encrypting messages.

Increasingly, officials in national governments, foreign military officers, business persons, and journalists, are obtaining access to the Internet and establishing individual e-mail addresses. There is even a commercial service that will shortly offer access to an online database of the names, organizational titles, phone/fax numbers, and Internet e-mail addresses of virtually all government officials in all countries. Using this information, it would be possible to employ the Internet as an additional medium for Psychological Operations (Psyops) campaigns. E-mail conveying the U.S. perspective on issues and events could be efficiently and rapidly disseminated to a very wide audience.

The U.S. might be able to employ the Internet offensively to help achieve unconventional warfare objectives. Information could be transmitted over the Internet to sympathetic groups operating in areas of concern that allows them to conduct operations themselves that we might otherwise have to send our own special forces to accomplish. Although such undertakings would have their own kinds of risks, they would have the benefit of reducing the physical risks to our special forces personnel, and limiting the direct political involvement of the United States since the actions we desire would be carried out by indigenous groups.

Roles During Conflict

Even if the actual presence of the Internet in the location of a conflict is very limited, the widespread access to Internet available in the U.S. and other parts of the developed world will provide a medium over which political debate and activism related to that conflict can occur. Thus the Internet can indirectly play an important role in the way the world deals

with a conflict, without having substantial physical presence within the conflict. The Internet can play an important positive role during future international crises and conflicts. In the chaotic conditions usually present in such situations, normal government and commercial reporting channels are often unreliable or unavailable, and the Internet might be one of the few means of communication present. Some of its uses might include:

- Getting news out of the region and into the U.S. government
- Getting information from the U.S. and other nations into the region
- Cultivating political and even operational support for the U.S. side and opposition to the other side.

In order to use the Internet most productively for such purposes, it would be necessary for DoD to address it directly and explicitly as an integral asset, rather than as an uncontrollable element of the environment whose role is determined by happenstance or as an afterthought. If viewed as a resource and systematically integrated into our planning and operations, the Internet can make some important contributions to conflict management and assuring the success of U.S. foreign policy.

Recommendations

NOTE: The recommendations listed below should be carried out only in full compliance with the letter and the spirit of the law, and without violating the privacy of American citizens

- All DoD professional and support personnel should have an Internet e-mail address with convenient access and a user-friendly interface.
- Individual analysts in DoD intelligence agencies should routinely monitor Internet traffic (that is readily accessible to the general public) related to their responsibilities. Agencies should establish high volume internal outlets to provide them with this traffic, subject to appropriate relevance filters.
- DoD intelligence agencies should investigate the role of the Internet in helping coordinate the operations of political activists and paramilitary groups in regions of interest
- An early warning capability should be established that uses Internet messages to help identify developing situations overseas that could lead to security threats
- Officials planning and conducting DoD civil affairs programs overseas should be informed about any activists working in their vicinity who use the Internet
- The OSD Public Affairs site on the Internet should accept feedback from callers and should provide responses, using the full potential of the Internet for supporting DoD public affairs programs. Although it would be impractical to provide an individual reply to every incoming e-mail message, statistical profiles of opinions conveyed by large volumes of messages could be used to compose periodic DoD bulletins addressing them in general terms. This would help provide a semi-interactive environment within our resource limitations.
- Subject to appropriate security and propriety precautions, DoD officials involved in formulating DoD policy should be given access to the advice and thinking of people on the Internet with relevant expertise.
- DoD should continue to monitor the evolution of the Internet and its role in national security.
- The Internet should be incorporated in our Psyops planning as an additional medium.
- Means of employing the Internet offensively in support of our unconventional warfare objectives should be explored.
- Senior DoD officials should be kept aware of domestic U.S. political developments on the Internet that relate to DoD interests.

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APPENDIX A

A CALL TO ACTION

Newsgroups. misc.activism.progressive Path: msunews!uwm.edu!spool.mu.edu!howland
reston.ans.net!gatech!news-feed-l .pe
achnet.edu!news.duke.edu!zombie.ncsc.mil!golf!mont!pencil.cs.missouri.edu!rich From:
dmc25(~columbia.edu (Dina M. Carreras) Subject: A CALL TO ACTION Message-ID:
<1994Dec16.020504.11617~mont.cs.missouri.edu> Followup-To: alt.activism.d Originator:
rich~pencil.cs.missouri.edu Sender: news(~mont.cs.missouri.edu Nntp-Posting-Host:
pencil.cs.missouri.edu Organization: Columbia University Distribution: usa Date: Fri, 16 Dec
1994 02:05:04 GMT Approved: map(~pencil.cs.missouri.edu Lines:69

ONE HUNDRED DAYS OF PROTEST

The Republican "Contract With America" to make the poor much poorer and the rich much richer is rapidly taking shape. Means-tested programs, including food and housing assistance, and aid to the elderly poor and disabled, will be cut, and funding capped, so that monies will not increase when needs increase. Legal immigrants will simply be denied aid. At least half of welfare families will be cut from the rolls; others will be forced into workfare slots at earnings averaging \$2.43 an hour. The Republican leadership, and some collaborating Democrats, plan a 3/5ths vote rule on tax increases, a balanced budget amendment and laws to prevent reallocating defense savings to social programs, thus sealing in concrete the spending and tax advantages to corporations and to the rich.

* The "Contract With America" is class war. The rich will get richer and the poor will get poorer.

* The "Contract With America" is race war. Millions will be singled out.

* The "Contract With America" is gender war. Millions of poor women will lose safety-net benefits; hundred of thousands of women human service workers will lose jobs. The reproductive rights of all women will be threatened.

* The "Contract With America" is generational war. Poor children will be helpless victims.

*ONLYANUPSURGE OF MASS PROTEST CAN AVERT THIS DISASTER! *

Concerned people all over the country must take the initiative. We do not need endless meetings and committees. We are already organized in countless groups and organizations. We can begin mobilizing, separately but in concert, in our local communities. Inform the press of your plans

- * Phone, write, e-mail, and send petitions to the White House and Congress by tens of thousands.
- * Mobilize thousands of demonstrations in local communities across the nation by union members, civil rights groups, women's groups, human service workers, students, and by sympathetic religious groups.
- * Fill the jails by engaging in acts of civil disobedience.
- * Organize senior citizens to come to the defense of poor children by picketing against cuts at welfare centers, prenatal clinics, and offices providing nutritional supplements.
- * Enlist clergy to hold funerals to mourn in advance the children who may die from malnutrition or denied health care.
- * Use the legitimacy of the National Voter Registration Act of 1993 to register clients to vote in thousands if human service agencies to swell the vote of victims in 1996.

PROTEST FOR 100 DAYS-We CAN turn the tide

Richard A. Cloward, Professor Columbia University Frances Fox Piven, Professor Graduate School at University Center, CUNY 5 Phone 212/854-4053 Fax 212/854-8727 E-mail rac6@columbia.edu

PLEASE COPY AND DISTRIBUTE

Appendix B

Protest: GOP '96 (originally San Diego press release)

Newsgroups: misc.activism.progressive Path: msunews!uwm.edu!vixen.cso.uiuc.edu!howland.reston.ans.net!news.starnet.net!wupost!golf!mont!pencil.cs.missouri.edu!rich From: kwr(~crash.cts.com (Keith W. Ramsey) Subject: Protest: GOP '96 (originally San Diego press release) Message-ID: <1994Dec16.020418.11476(~mont.cs.missouri.edu~ Followup-To: alt.activism.d Originator: rich(~pencil.cs.missouri.edu Sender: news~mont.cs.missouri.edu Nntp-Posting-Host: pencil.cs.missouri.edu Organization: /etc/organization Distribution: usa Date: Fri, 16 Dec 1994 02:04:18 GMT Approved: map~pencil.cs.missouri.edu Lines:53

PRESS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

December 15, 1995

Upon the announcement of San Diego as the selected location for the 1996 Republican National Convention, local activists began gearing up to meet the GOP with a series of protests and demonstrations.

With the GOP's historical opposition to women's equality, Lesbian & Gay civil rights, and freedom of choice, and with the party's support for Prop 187, insensitivity to environmental issues, and hawkish pro-war stances, the possibilities for expressing popular dissent against Republican policies are virtually endless. For that reason, a local committee is forming to help facilitate the largest number of protests and demonstrations for the broadest range of issues possible.

Called Protest: GOP '96, the committee seeks to serve as a local point of contact for organizations from across the country intending to demonstrate during the GOP Convention in August of 1996. Keith Ramsey, a co-founder of Queer Nation/San Diego who also assisted with the reorganization of ACT-UP/San Diego several years ago, is coordinating the formation of the committee. "My goal in organizing the group is to assist in any way possible any organization that wishes to demonstrate during the '96 convention." Ramsey expects the Protest committee to fulfill that goal by providing maps and timetables showing where and when other organizations have planned events and by serving as liaison with local law-enforcement agencies and other government bodies. "We can help groups in other regions secure the necessary local permits, make hotel arrangements, and by providing other similar services," says Ramsey. "And by maintaining a central information file we can curtail conflicts between organizations trying to assemble at the same place and time which will make the scheduled demonstrations run more smoothly."

Members of the California Green Party, ACT UP, and the Radical Faeries have already been contacted and have expressed enthusiastic support for the project, as have a number of individuals not affiliated with particular organizations. Viewing the committee more as a networking resource than as a protesting group in its own right, Ramsey anticipates utilizing a number of media to disseminate information. In addition to establishing a telephone number and post office box, Protest: GOP '96 will have an account on the Internet, complete with an e-mail address and a World Wide Web home page accessible through Mosaic and other web browsers. Until those accounts have been set up, anyone needing information on the committee or who would like to serve as a committee member should contact Ramsey via e-mail at kwr@crash.cts.com

Appendix C

Newsgroups: misc.activism.progressive Path:
interramp.com!psinntp!newsserver.pixel.kodak.com!news.itw.org!newshost.marc
From: "Dale Wharton" Subject: Special Forces practice assaults in Miami Message-ID:
<1994Dec25.180456.10556 @mont.cs.missouri.edu> Followup-To: alt.activism.d
Originator: rich@pencil.cs.missouri.edu Sender:
news@mont.cs.missouri.edu Nntp-Posting-Host: pencil.cs.missouri.edu Organization:
private Distribution: na Date: Sun, 25 Dec 1994 18:04:56 GMT Approved:
map@pencil.cs.missouri.edu Lines: 16
This article was forwarded to you by dale@dale.cam.org (Dale Wharton):
- cut here

-- --

From: bdolan@well.sf.ca.us (Brad Dolan)
Newsgroups: alt.conspiracy
Subject: Special Forces practice assaults in Miami
Date: 24 Dec 1994 15:47:40 GMT
Organization: The Whole Earth 'Lectronic Link, Sausalito, CA

The Associated Press reported on 12/24/94:
The U.S. Army ... is preparing to invade Miami Beach. [...]

Between Jan. 6 and Jan. 14, troops from the U.S. Army Special Operations Command will climb and rappel off the empty 11-story St. Moritz Hotel, firing paint pellets in training

exercises. The U.S. Army Special Operations Command includes Green Berets, Rangers and psychological warfare specialists.

Appendix D

Path: interramp.com!interramp.com!psinntp!rutgers!uwm.edu!Vixen-cso-uiuc.edu!h From: atsQlocust.cic.net (Arm The Spirit)
Newsgroups: alt.politics.radical-left,soc.culture.mexican,soc.right.human Subject: Letter From The EZLN Date: 14 Feb 1995
13:4 9:22 GMT Organization: ETEXT Archives Lines: 53 Message-ID: <3hqcd2\$6m5Qspruce.cic.net> NNTP-Posting-Host: locust.cic.net Xref: interramp.com alt.politics.radical-left:21412 soc.culture.mexican:11274

Letter From The EZLN
February 11, 1995
Chiapas, Mexico

To the people of Mexico To the national and international press To the peoples of the world

The Indigenous Clandestine Revolutionary Committee, General Command of the EZLN We have made a call to all of our brothers and sisters of Mexico to detain this genocidal war that the bad government is waging against us.

The federal government is acting with lies, it is carrying out a dirty war in our villages. Yesterday around noon, 14 helicopters bombed the area around Morelia and Gamucha, as well as shot artillery fire in the area under Zapatista control, thousands of federal soldiers have penetrated into the interior of the jungle, via Monte Libano, Agua Azul, Santa Lucia, La Gamucha Champes, San Agustin, Guadalupe Tepeyac and others. They are surrounding us with death and ugliness. We, the Zapatistas, as troops and civilians, up to this point, have done everything possible to fall back, but now we do not have any other option except to defend ourselves and to defend our villages, thousands of civilians have left their homes.

Brothers and sisters, the government of Ernesto Zedillo is killing us, it is killing children, it is attacking women and raping them. We ask the people of Mexico and all the people of the world to do something to stop this war.

Again we ask you, brothers and sisters, don't leave us alone.

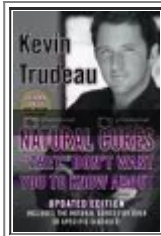
We will act with dignity.

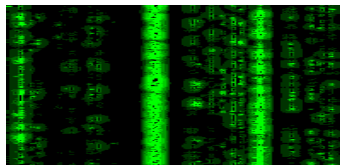
Liberty, Justice, and Democracy.

Fraternally,

The Indigenous Clandestine Revolutionary Committee, General Command of the EZLN
(Translated by Cindy Arnold, NCDM volunteer).

 [Mountain Rose Herbs. A Herbs, Health & Harmony Com](http://MountainRoseHerbs.AHerbs,Health&Harmony.Com)

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