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INTRO TO STS

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INTERNET, Internet, internet, INTERNET

It's 2016. June. The New York Times [changes their style rule](#) to uncapitalize the 'I' in 'Internet'. The Times writes this change could prompt several questions: "Does this reflect a fundamental shift in society's view of technology? Does it signal some milestone in the history of online communication? Is a 'legacy' news organization finally acknowledging the ubiquity of digital information?"

Here is how they answer: "Well, no. The real reason is more mundane. Others are doing it, so we think we should, too." So it goes. The internet has become a part of our daily lives, making it almost like a public resource like air or water, and as such, people are tending to decapitalize the 'I', which is a familiar phenomenon as other words have experienced this common, mundane process. They point to a "common tendency to capitalize newly coined or unfamiliar terms. Once a term becomes familiar and quotidian, there is a tendency to drop the capital letter." The author also speaks more broadly about the Times style preference towards less capitalization, like NASCAR is Nascar and UNICEF is Unicef, but besides that the article is over.

But what if I told you that the internet's lowercase journey was different from other capitalized to lowercased words that enter our lexicon. In fact, what if I told you that I think the internet should be spelled INTERNET to fall more in line with the style rule of its creator, DARPA. DARPA is the research and development agency for the United States Department of

Defense, and does high-risk, high-reward revolutionary research to the avail of the United States Military. They are responsible for developing TRANSIT (also called NAVSAT) in the 1960s, a predecessor to GPS. They also are responsible for developing ARPANET, the predecessor of the... internet? This is why it should be spelled INTERNET.

Since 1958, DARPA has a tendency to be responsible for highly influential technologies, like the internet, but never ends up having their name attached to the consumer/public version of the product.

Doing some more research into the New York Times, in an article written by the same author titled “[Why The Times Calls Trump ‘Mr.’ \(No, We’re Not Being Rude\)](#),” where using courtesy titles like ‘Mr.’ or ‘Ms.’ is a style rule, but “the Times follows tradition and continues to use the titles General and Admiral for retired military officers,” which looks to me as if the Times has a soft spot for the military. Don’t take my word for it: I found another article from the Times that affectionately refers to DARPA in the title, “[How an Agency of Oddballs Transformed Modern War and Modern Life](#),” as an agency of oddballs. Even though this was just a review, it shows that stylistically, the Times has no problem patting DARPA on the back for their creativity.

So what if the Times made this pretty mundane decision of succumbing to stylistic peer pressure, but beneath was an implicit acknowledgement in further suppression of the relationship between the US Military and daily-life-affecting revolutionary technology like the INTERNET. If I was the DOD, I would want to keep as low of a profile as I can, almost like a stealth jet, to keep Technology mundane and neutral.

What’s important here, and key to destabilization, is taking this information and returning to the questions the Times raised but dismissed by citing the change was due to peer pressure.

The first two questions ask, “Does this reflect a fundamental shift in society’s view of technology? Does it signal some milestone in the history of online communication?” From a standard perspective, usage over time supersedes all other processes at work here, which would imply that nothing of note happened here, just descriptivist updates to language. But DARPA *is* responsible for fundamental shifts and milestones in technology and online communication, and the all-lowercase internet obscures its (frankly scary) relationship with DARPA.



Goodbye, Internet.
Hello, internet!

(accompanying pictures)