

6-12-1998

# Trends. Current Events in Northern Ireland, Mexico, and Iraq: The Timeless Problem in Intelligence Operations

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## Recommended Citation

Editor (1998) "Trends. Current Events in Northern Ireland, Mexico, and Iraq: The Timeless Problem in Intelligence Operations," *International Bulletin of Political Psychology*: Vol. 4 : Iss. 23 , Article 4.  
Available at: <https://commons.erau.edu/ibpp/vol4/iss23/4>

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## International Bulletin of Political Psychology

Title: Trends. Current Events in Northern Ireland, Mexico, and Iraq: The Timeless Problem in Intelligence Operations

Author: Editor

Volume: 4

Issue: 23

Date: 1998-06-12

Keywords: Drug Trafficking, Intelligence Operations, Iraq, Mexico, Northern Ireland, United Nations, United States, Violence

So-called security intellectuals often posit that there are three kinds of intelligence operations. (1) Espionage to collect valuable information. (2) Covert action to influence events relevant to the initiator's security. (3) Counterintelligence to prevent (1) and (2) from occurring to the initiator. All three can be combined to address a specific security concern. Yet all three--regardless of success--may make a future security challenge only that much more difficult to address.

In the run-up to the June 25 elections in Northern Ireland, intelligence operations are being implemented to prevent or cause political violence depending on political objectives. Once violence is prevented or caused, however, sophisticated observers may readily surmise the operational "foot print" or "signature" rendering a similar operation less likely to succeed in the future or more likely to be coopted by an adversary with noxious blowback to the originator.

In Mexico and the United States (US), a successful US-directed intelligence operation identified and deactivated portions of money laundering networks controlled by Mexican illicit drug trafficking networks. Not only has this operation activated nationalist outrage in Mexico--some of it sincere, some simulated--over sovereignty violations, it also has decreased the possibility a similar "sting" may be successful in the future.

Recent briefings by the United Nations (UN) Special Commission to the UN Security Council on the status of Iraq's compliance with agreements stemming from the end of the Persian Gulf War contained very detailed descriptions of Special Commission intelligence operations and those of supporting countries and organizations. These briefings may have increased Security Council support to hold Iraq to the agreements, but also have further enlightened Iraq as to how to circumvent the intelligence operations.

The dilemma to intelligence authorities is a timeless one. The options--never implement an operation, never implement the same operation, never expose an operation--are politically unacceptable, unlikely, or highly improbable. Perhaps all intelligence authorities can do is factor into their planning the benefits to adversaries regardless of an operation's success. (See Crossette, B. (June 4, 1998). Inspectors tell how Iraq concealed programs. *The New York Times*, <http://www.nytimes.com>; Johnson, L.K. (1996). *Secret agencies: U.S. intelligence in a hostile world*. Yale University Press; Millar, M.G., & Millar, K. (1995). *Detection of deception in familiar and unfamiliar persons: The effects of information restriction*. *Journal of Nonverbal Behavior*, 19, 69-84; Nicks, S., S.D., Korn, J.H., & Mainieri, T. (1997). *The rise and fall of deception in social psychology and personality research, 1921 to 1994*. *Ethics and Behavior*, 7, 69-77; O' Tuama, S. (June 4, 1998). *Recruitment attempt exposed*. *An Phoblacht Republican News*, <http://www.irlnet.com/current/news/04recr.html>; Sieber, J.E., Iannuzzo, R., & Rodriguez, B. (1995). *Deception methods in psychology: Have they changed in 23 years?* *Ethics and Behavior*, 5, 67-85; US says Mexico relations strong (June 11, 1998). *El Universal*, <http://www.el-universal.com.mex>.) (Keywords: Drug Trafficking, Intelligence Operations, Iraq, Mexico, Northern Ireland, United Nations, United States, Violence.)