

DOD SPENDS MORE ON DOMESTIC PSYOPS THAN ON FOREIGN PSYOPS

The AP just did a great investigation on how much money DOD is spending on PR and outreach (via Noah Shachtman). There are lots of nauseating details in the story: that PR funds have grown 63% in the last five years, that DOD has almost as many people working in PR as the State Department employs altogether.

But what gets me is that DOD is spending more for Domestic PsyOps (otherwise known as Public Affairs) than it spends on Foreign PsyOps.

The biggest chunk of funds – about \$1.6 billion – goes into recruitment and advertising. Another \$547 million goes into public affairs, which reaches American audiences. And about \$489 million more goes into what is known as psychological operations, which targets foreign audiences.

[snip]

Recruitment and advertising are the only two areas where Congress has authorized the military to influence the American public. Far more controversial is public affairs, because of the prohibition on propaganda to the American public.

"It's not up to the Pentagon to sell policy to the American people," says Rep. Paul Hodes, D-N.H., who sponsored legislation in Congress last year reinforcing the ban.

Spending on public affairs has more than doubled since 2003. Robert Hastings, acting secretary of defense, says the growth reflects changes in the information market, along with the fact

that the U.S. is now fighting two wars.

"The role of public affairs is to provide you the information so that you can make an informed decision yourself," Hastings says. "There is no place for spin at the Department of Defense."

But on Dec. 12, the Pentagon's inspector general released an audit finding that the public affairs office may have crossed the line into propaganda. The audit found the Department of Defense "may appear to merge inappropriately" its public affairs with operations that try to influence audiences abroad. It also found that while only 89 positions were authorized for public affairs, 126 government employees and 31 contractors worked there.

And, surprise surprise, Rummy brought these two functions closer together.

I'm wondering if this misplaced focus on propagandizing Americans explains how General Petraeus got to flip that coin at the Super Bowl. How much does it cost to pre-empt the football heros for some General with an over-developed instinct for self-promotion?