PSYOP Against US (2)

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In my last column, I introduced the issue of PYSOP (psychological operations) and looked at the 1964 Gulf of Tonkin incident that was used by the Johnson administration as an excuse to begin bombing North Vietnam.

Here's a brief summary from President George W. Bush of the threatening behavior by Iranian vessels in the Strait of Hormuz on Sunday January 6, 2008: “Our ships were moving along very peacefully off the Iranian border, in territorial waters–international waters, and Iranian boats came out and were very provocative. And it was a dangerous gesture on their part. We have made it clear, publicly, and they know our position—and that is there will be serious consequences if they attack our ships, pure and simple.”

However, there are increasing doubts about the details of this incident. Investigative historian Gareth Porter spoke on Democracy Now! On January 11, 2008 in a discussion of the course of mainstream media reporting of the incident. At one point, Porter said, “I mean, there were Pentagon officials apparently calling reporters and telling them that something had happened in the Strait of Hormuz, which represented a threat to American ships and that there was a near battle on the high seas. The way it was described to reporters, it was made to appear to be a major threat to the ships and a major threat of war. And that’s the way it was covered by CNN, by CBS and other networks, as well as by print media.”

He continued, “Then I think the next major thing that happened was a briefing by the commander of the 5th fleet in Bahrain, the Vice Admiral Kevin Cosgriff, which is very interesting. If you look carefully at the transcript, which was not reported accurately by the media, or not reported at all practically, … Vice Admiral Cosgriff actually makes it clear that the ships were never in danger, that they never believed they were in danger, and that they were never close to firing on the Iranian boats. And this is the heart of what actually happened, which was never reported by the US media.”

I urge all information security specialists to be active analysts of what the news media report. Because of our work, we have particular expertise in evaluating risk and weighing the credibility of alarming reports in our particular sphere. We should apply our analytical skills and perspectives in risk management to public affairs at all levels. Much as physicians can usefully comment on public-health policy issues, we can constructively share our expertise with our communities through writing, speaking at public events, or simply by chatting with our families and friends about threats and reports of threats.

I have found useful critical analysis of media reporting at several sites such as Media Watch, NewsHour mediawatch, Fairness & Accuracy in Reporting (FAIR).
http://www.fair.org/index.php>, and On the Media (radio program) <
http://www.onthemedia.org/>. If you can tolerate a left-wing perspective, _The Nation_
regularly apply critical analysis to mainstream news reporting.

Folks, it’s bad enough when PSYOP and DISINFO (disinformation campaigns) are used against
the US; it’s unacceptable to have our own government and a complaisant mainstream press using
these tools against _us_.

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