

THE CHINESE PEOPLE'S LIBERATION ARMY AND INFORMATION WARFARE

Larry M. Wortzel

The Chinese People's Liberation Army (PLA) has taken decades-old concepts in electronic warfare and psychological operations and modernized them to support integrated, joint-military operations across the domains of war. It is engaged in a major effort to integrate its capabilities to conduct information operations and support espionage. The PLA uses cyber warfare as a strategic way to improve its own defense industries while also exploring vulnerabilities in U.S. and other Western military systems and government information systems.

Two departments of the PLA, the General Staff Department's Third and Fourth Departments, are organized to penetrate an adversary's communications and computer systems systematically, extract information, and exploit that information. The PLA's integrated network electronic warfare (INEW) doctrine is Soviet radio-electronic combat doctrine on Chinese steroids. The PLA has added computer network operations and attacks on space systems to the Soviet doctrine to disrupt command-and-control systems as well as logistics and resupply systems. This INEW doctrine is fully integrated with space warfare designed to degrade an adversary's space-based sensor and communications systems. It also includes provisions for precision strikes on U.S. bases, forces, and embarkation areas in the homeland.

At the same time, the PLA General Political Department has found a new role beyond traditional psychological warfare, perception management,

and propaganda operations. The General Political Department is focused on justifying military action through legal precedent, taking advantage of customary and established international law to create justification for military action. Dealing with what the PLA calls the "three warfares" is a difficult issue. Public education in the United States helps make Americans aware of the nature and intent of the PLA's media-warfare effort at molding public opinion and its perception-management activities. Exposure to scrutiny makes it more difficult for the PLA to succeed in these efforts. The same type of public education program is needed to make sure Americans understand the way that PLA military intelligence and the General Political Department use cover organizations such as the China Association for International Friendly Contact to influence national policy. Also, U.S. Government and military legal scholars should respond to arguments made in China that would subvert normative international legal practice.

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