Content and technologies of training propagandists for Internal Affairs Agencies

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Abstract: Amid the growing destructive influence of social media and the spread of fake news, traditional propaganda methods require re-evaluation and adaptation. The issue of training personnel capable of effectively conducting information and propaganda activities within the Russian Ministry of Internal Affairs has become particularly relevant. The aim of this study was to develop and pilot a professional development programme for Internal Affairs Agencies personnel responsible for propaganda work. A total of 187 participants were involved, including 100 Internal Affairs Agencies officers, 30 active propagandists, and 57 participants in the advanced training course. Data collection methods included questionnaires, the projective technique "Incomplete Sentences", entrance and exit testing, and the analysis of practical cases. The developed programme comprises five thematic modules designed to develop both theoretical knowledge and practical skills in propaganda activities. Pilot results demonstrated a significant increase in participant competencies: the average post-training test score rose from 9.5 to 13 out of 15 ($p<0.001$), and the proportion of participants with a high level of preparedness increased from 29.8 % to 84.2 %. Notably, substantial progress was achieved in the identification of fake information (from 39 % to 97 % correct responses) and in conducting counter-propaganda activities (from 47 % to 96 %). These results indicate the high effectiveness of the developed methodology and its potential to enhance the quality of propaganda work within law enforcement agencies.

Keywords: information and propaganda activities; Internal Affairs Agencies; professional development; information counteraction; fake news; counter-propaganda.

INTRODUCTION

Amid the transformation of the information space and the rise of hybrid threats, the professional training of Internal Affairs Agencies personnel responsible for information and propaganda work has become increasingly important. According to research in the field of information and psychological influence, contemporary propaganda activities in the law enforcement sphere require not only an understanding of ideological foundations, but also the mastery of digital technologies, consideration of the cognitive specifics of information perception, and proficiency in methods of countering disinformation [1].

The analysis of existing studies makes it possible to identify several key problems in this field. First, there is a lack of a unified concept for training the personnel units of Internal Affairs Agencies responsible for information and propaganda work (hereinafter – propagandists) [2–4]. Second, the transformation of media consumption, driven by the growing influence of social networks, messengers, and news aggregators, as well as the increasing amount of time spent online, requires propagandists to master digital tools and understand the specifics of how modern audiences perceive

information[1]. Third, the issue of evaluating the effectiveness of propaganda materials produced by Internal Affairs Agencies personnel remains unresolved [5].

Of particular interest is the study [6], which examines the effect of social conformity, cognitive biases, and technological solutions for digital propaganda (including the use of bots, Big Data, and paid-user tactics). According to the author [6], the influence of political propaganda in the digital environment will increase over time, and within one or two generations the digital space may become the primary arena of propaganda competition. The achievement of a dominant position of the digital environment for propaganda is possible primarily due to the development of its technological base, which is analysed in detail in study [7]. This includes technological solutions for digital propaganda such as the use of neural network algorithms and digital actants for targeted influence on mass consciousness, as well as psychological aspects of the perception of propaganda messages (the echo chamber effect and the polarisation of society through managed discussions). The author [7] is strongly convinced that current transformations in the field of digital technologies create significant potential for

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[1] *Electronics Hub researched average screen time in 45 countries. Timeweb Community.ru. URL: https://timeweb.com/ru/community/articles/electronics-hub-issledovali-srednee-ekrannoe-vremya-v-45-stranah.*

computational propaganda conflicts in the digital environment between global actors. According to the author, such conflicts include confrontations between geopolitical opponents with advanced digital infrastructures and the necessary technologies, including artificial intelligence [7]. While the focus on technological aspects is central, it does not diminish the importance of psycho-physiological mechanisms of perception. As shown in studies on multimedia perception, the combination of visual, auditory, and olfactory stimuli can enhance the emotional impact of content, which may be employed in digital propaganda to shape targeted behavioural responses [8].

The modern challenges of the information age require Internal Affairs Agencies not only to ensure the high professional training of their personnel, but also to foster strong civic and patriotic qualities, as well as a conscious stance amid the complex contradictions of contemporary society. Addressing this task is entrusted to information and propaganda work, which is aimed at strengthening the ideological resilience of personnel and building public trust in the law enforcement system. In the context of the widespread dissemination of diverse and often unreliable materials across information networks, traditional methods of propaganda require reconsideration and adaptation to new realities. This, in turn, necessitates the improvement of the training system for propaganda personnel, both within the framework of professional education and through advanced training programmes for employees responsible for propaganda activities in Internal Affairs Agencies units.

The relevance of developing the content and technology of training propagandists is determined by several factors. First, until recently, the training of propagandists in educational institutions was not carried out in a targeted manner. For example, a corresponding 108-hour course is offered at St. Petersburg University of the Ministry of Internal Affairs of Russia within the Faculty for Personnel Work, where responsibilities extend far beyond organising propaganda. In practice, positions of propagandists in units are often assigned to employees without specialised training in this area. Second, the transformation of media consumption[2], associated with the growing influence of social networks, messengers, and news aggregators, requires propagandists to master digital tools and understand the specifics of how modern audiences perceive information. Third, the intensification of destructive information influence, including the spread of fake news and manipulative technologies, poses to Internal Affairs Agencies the task of developing knowledge, skills, and competencies in counter-propaganda activities [9]. Fourth, effective propaganda activity in the law enforcement sphere must be based on a deep understanding of the socio-psychological mechanisms through which information affects personnel perception [10; 11].

The analysis of scientific literature has revealed a significant gap in existing research – the absence of a methodologically grounded professional development programme for propagandists of Internal Affairs Agencies, one that would integrate theoretical knowledge with practical skills of working in the digital environment. This problem is particularly acute in the context of the special military operation, where the quality of propaganda work largely determines the moral and psychological state of personnel.

The objective of this study is to develop and test a professional development programme for Internal Affairs Agencies personnel responsible for propaganda work.

METHODS

The study was conducted using a comprehensive approach that included an analysis of regulatory and legal documents governing information and propaganda work in Internal Affairs Agencies, as well as empirical methods of data collection. The main regulatory document defining the objectives and forms of propaganda activities was Order No. 500 of the Ministry of Internal Affairs of Russia, "On the Approval of the Regulation on the Procedure for Organising Moral and Psychological Support for the Activities of Internal Affairs Agencies of the Russian Federation"[3].

The empirical part of the study included a questionnaire survey of personnel and the pilot testing of the programme. A total of 187 respondents participated in the study, divided into three groups:

– group 1 – personnel of Internal Affairs Agencies units (investigators, operatives, and district police officers), 100 participants, who took part in a questionnaire designed to identify the level of understanding of key terms (propaganda, disinformation, fake news, etc.) and to assess practical difficulties;

– group 2 – propagandists directly engaged in information and propaganda work in the units, 30 participants, who took part in a survey consisting of 12 open-ended questions aimed at analysing media consumption and attitudes toward information;

– group 3 – participants of professional development courses under the programme "Content and Technology of Information and Propaganda Work in the Internal Affairs Agencies" (hereinafter – the Programme), 57 participants, who took part in the pilot testing of the training Programme. They underwent entry and exit testing to assess the dynamics of professional competence development (15 questions) and were also assessed using the projective technique "Incomplete Sentences".

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[2] *How much time do Russians spend on the Internet? Inclient.ru. URL: https://inclient.ru/time-user-internet-russia-stats.*

[3] *Order of the Ministry of Internal Affairs of Russia dated August 27, 2024 No. 500 "On the Approval of the Regulation on the Procedure for Organizing Moral and Psychological Support for the Activities of the Internal Affairs Agencies of the Russian Federation". Konsultant-Plyus: spravochno-pravovaya sistema. URL: https://www.consultant.ru/document/cons_doc_LAW_486292/620779d24d715222a3f234164c68723cfe511797/.*

Questions for analysing media consumption and attitudes toward information among Internal Affairs Agencies personnel:

1. How much time per day do I spend on the Internet (including all devices)?

2. How do I assess the reliability of information on the Internet?

3. In my work, I have encountered tasks related to propaganda…

4. To persuade or re-persuade people for me is…

5. The main difficulties I have faced when persuading others are…

6. The direction of propaganda and persuasion for me is…

7. If I had the opportunity to learn more about propaganda methods, I would…

8. I believe that effective propaganda should…

9. When I hear the term "propaganda," the first thing that comes to mind is…

10. To improve my persuasion skills, I need…

11. I assess the impact of propaganda on society as…

12. If I were tasked with preparing a propaganda material, I would…

RESULTS

1. The Programme "Content and Technology of Information and Propaganda Work in the Internal Affairs Agencies"

The Programme included training sessions with participants on five topics:

1) The content of the concepts: information and propaganda in political and educational work within Internal Affairs Agencies units";

2) Socio-psychological conditions for effective propaganda";

3) Psychological conditions for the perception of propaganda materials by Internal Affairs Agencies personnel";

4) Forms and methods of information and propaganda work in Internal Affairs Agencies";

5) Organisation of counter-propaganda and debunking fake news".

In order to specify the practical component of each class session, case studies were developed on ten topics: "Concepts of information and propaganda work," "Image of the Internal Affairs Agencies," "Problems of the Internal Affairs Agencies," "Russophobia," "Special military operation," "The Fifth Column," "History of propaganda," "Fake news," "Counterpropaganda," and "Contemporary ideological struggle."

1.1 The first topic: "The content of the concepts: information and propaganda in political and educational work within the Internal Affairs Agencies"

This topic is focused on the conceptual understanding of the basic categories of information and propaganda work within the system of the Ministry of Internal Affairs of Russia. Particular attention was drawn to the fact that a propagandist in the Internal Affairs Agencies performs not only an informational but also an educational function, especially under conditions of heightened social tension, politicised discourses, and the extreme challenges of the modern era. Unlike traditional educators working with depoliticised subjects, a propaganda specialist in law enforcement faces the task of shaping worldview orientations that touch upon fundamental issues such as the meaning of professional service, civic identity, and the value foundations of statehood.

The theoretical component of the session involves a comprehensive analysis of the concept of "information" as a general scientific category, with particular emphasis on its legal and regulatory interpretation. Considerable attention is devoted to the professional competencies of propagandists, specifically their ability to identify in normative legal acts those provisions that facilitate the achievement of educational and socialisation objectives. At the same time, the session underscores the necessity of maintaining a balance between the ideological dimension and the ethical responsibility associated with the creation of propaganda content.

The central focus of the session is the examination of propaganda as a distinct type of information that carries ideological content and is aimed at shaping public consciousness. In the context of political and educational work within the Internal Affairs Agencies, emphasis is placed on its role in clarifying the decisions of the country's leadership and the ministry, as well as in ensuring understanding and support for state policy in the field of security. The typology of propaganda is analysed in detail, with a distinction drawn between constructive forms (mobilising, patriotic, positive, creative, explanatory) and destructive forms (manipulative, false, destabilising, destructive). Special attention is given to the purposes behind the creation of propaganda materials and the interests of the groups that prepare them.

After the theoretical part of the session, the group is divided into subgroups of 4–5 participants to complete practical tasks.

The practical part of the session is conducted using interactive methods. At the initial stage, participants are asked to independently formulate definitions of key concepts, followed by a group discussion.

The following pedagogical techniques are applied during the session:

– case method with analysis of specific examples of propaganda materials;

– group work for comparative analysis of domestic and international experience;

– visualisation of results through the creation of comparative tables;

– reflective discussion of identified patterns.

During the discussion, a system of visual assessment of participant activity is employed using coloured markers: blue stickers are assigned for accurate and complete answers, green for answers requiring minor correction, and orange indicates a lack of verbal participation. The use of an individualised approach, providing participants with additional opportunities to contribute through guiding questions and personal prompts, gradually engages previously passive participants in the discussion, thereby ensuring equitable participation of all group members in the educational process. This method contributes to increased overall engagement and fosters an environment where each participant has the opportunity to express themselves.

1.2. The second topic: "Socio-psychological conditions for effective propaganda"

Its content includes the following issues:

– social and psychological factors influencing the effectiveness of propaganda: analysis of the target audience, its social and cultural characteristics, as well as psychological mechanisms that enhance propaganda impact;

– features of working with adults (andragogy): pre-existing beliefs, value orientations, and attitudes toward phenomena, events, and ideas that are the focus of propaganda efforts;

– distribution of levels of conviction across different audiences (convinced, supportive, doubtful, indifferent) [12].

The objective of the second topic is to develop participants' systematic understanding of the socio-psychological mechanisms underlying effective propaganda work and to cultivate practical skills for adapting propaganda messages to the characteristics of different target audiences.

The practical part of the session is based on interactive teaching methods aimed at developing participants' skills in analysing the audience and adapting propaganda messages. The group is divided into subgroups of 4–5 participants, each working on a specific case that involves role distribution among participants and subsequent simulation of various socio-psychological scenarios. During the case discussions, particular attention is paid to the technique of distinguishing different types of audiences according to their level of conviction – from active supporters to categorical opponents of the propagated ideas.

During the sessions, it is particularly emphasised that effective propaganda work within the Internal Affairs Agencies should be based on the principles of proactive information dissemination. This entails providing personnel with verified information on key issues before they encounter interpretations in open sources, and, if conflicting information has circulated in networks or as rumours, conducting explanatory work to clarify the facts.

An important component of the session on the second topic is the development of participants' practical skills in public speaking and conducting discussions. Each participant is provided in advance with materials to prepare a brief propaganda presentation, which is then analysed by the entire group. During the analysis, particular attention is paid to aspects such as the emphasis of key points, use of emotional tone, and techniques for maintaining audience attention. After receiving feedback, participants are given the opportunity to adjust their presentations and demonstrate the newly acquired skills again.

The concluding part of the session is devoted to reflecting on the social significance of propaganda work as a tool for shaping civic engagement, patriotic values, and professional solidarity among personnel of the Internal Affairs Agencies. It is emphasised that even within a limited time-frame, it is possible to foster participants' motivation for further self-improvement in this area.

1.3. The third topic: "Psychological conditions for the perception of propaganda materials by Internal Affairs Agencies personnel"

It begins with a theoretical introduction, in which the main psychological concepts of information perception are presented. Particular emphasis is placed on analysing the factors underlying the formation of trust in information and the mechanisms of cognitive distortions. During the discussion, it is highlighted that the process of information perception is multi-stage: even when personnel have doubts about the reliability of information, they tend first to familiarise themselves with its content and only then seek additional verification through alternative sources or consultations with colleagues. The discussion with participants also focuses on identifying the primary channels through which information is perceived.

The practical part of the session includes diagnostic testing using adapted questionnaires (for example, methods for determining perception modalities—auditory, visual, kinesthetic), as well as case simulations with examples of propaganda materials. Participants are asked to analyse which content elements (text, image, sound) attracted their attention first and to complete experimental tasks comparing reactions to the same material presented in different formats (video, infographics, audio message).

During group work, various formats of informational messages are simulated, followed by an assessment of their effectiveness for different psychological types. Particular attention is paid to techniques for adapting content to specific perceptual characteristics and to methods for emotionally engaging the audience.

1.4. The fourth topic: "Forms and methods of information and propaganda work in Internal Affairs Agencies"

The topic is aimed to identify the optimal combination of traditional and modern digital technologies for propaganda impact within the Internal Affairs Agencies system. The practical work with participants began with comprehensive questionnaire surveys. During the sessions, particular attention was paid to the comparative analysis of the effectiveness of various propaganda formats, including posters, leaflets, informational bulletins, and video materials for internal screens.

The practical sessions are based on the principles of interactivity and include several specific forms of work. As part of the discussion of real propaganda campaigns, participants are asked to analyse concrete examples from contemporary Internal Affairs Agencies information and propaganda practice. For instance, they examine case studies on countering fake news during mass events or algorithms for refuting false information regarding law enforcement activities. During short simulation exercises, participants assume the roles of unit managers responsible for personnel work, where they must respond promptly to simulated crisis information situations: a surge of negativity on social media, the spread of disinformation among personnel, or the urgent need to communicate the agency's official position.

1.5. The fifth topic: "Organisation of counter-propaganda and debunking fake news"

The topic places particular emphasis on developing participants' systematic understanding of counter-propaganda as a comprehensive set of measures aimed at neutralising destructive informational influence. The theoretical component

of the session explores the essence of counter-propaganda in the context of Internal Affairs Agencies activities, highlighting its importance for protecting personnel from hostile ideological influence and maintaining the stability of the law enforcement system. Special attention is given to the legal aspect, particularly the provisions of Article 13.15 of the Code of Administrative Offenses of the Russian Federation, which defines fake information as knowingly false data disseminated under the guise of truthful reports.

The practical part of the session focuses on the analysis of contemporary information security challenges, with particular attention to Russia's position as one of the countries most vulnerable to cyberattacks. During the discussion, the psychological mechanisms of the impact of fake information are examined in detail (participants are recommended to consult sources [13; 14]), including features of cognitive perception, the tendency to consume negative content, and the phenomenon of "information blindness" (participants are recommended to consult source [15]). Issues of information-psychological security for Internal Affairs Agencies personnel are also addressed (participants are recommended to consult sources [16; 17]).

The training comprises several interrelated components. The theoretical part is aimed at developing knowledge of the psychological mechanisms of information perception, manipulative influence techniques, and the legal foundations for countering disinformation (participants are recommended to consult sources [18–21]). The practice-oriented component involves the analysis of real cases of information attacks, mastering fact-checking tools, and developing algorithms for counter-propaganda response. The reflective component enables participants to evaluate the effectiveness of various counter-propaganda methods and to develop skills in critical analysis of media content.

Particular attention is given to the methodology of working with social networks and messaging platforms as primary channels for the dissemination of disinformation. Participants are instructed on the characteristic features of fake information: emotional saturation, simplified cause-and-effect constructions, appeals to stereotypical notions, and the absence of references to authoritative sources. An analysis of "colour revolutions" in neighbouring countries is conducted to clearly demonstrate the destructive consequences of eroding trust in governmental authorities (participants are recommended to consult sources [22; 23]).

The concluding part of the session is devoted to developing concrete recommendations for integrating the acquired knowledge into everyday professional activities. Emphasis is placed on the importance of continuously enhancing information literacy and critical thinking, both among the personnel themselves and within the units they supervise. Particular attention is given to the need for systematic efforts to explain the nature and mechanisms of destructive informational influence at all levels of professional training within the Ministry of Internal Affairs of Russia.

2. Diagnostic Tools

A system of criteria and indicators was developed for the comprehensive assessment of participants' professional competencies.

Theoretical knowledge was assessed on a 15-point scale: 0–5 points corresponded to a low level (fragmentary knowledge), 6–10 to a medium level (basic understanding with errors), and 11–15 to a high level (systematic knowledge).

Practical skills were assessed through case study solutions according to three criteria: depth of analysis (0–2 points), practical applicability (0–2 points), and creativity (0–1 point). For depth of analysis, 0 points indicated a superficial approach without argumentation, 1 point indicated partial argumentation, and 2 points indicated a comprehensive analysis with an evidence base. Practical applicability was assessed as follows: 0 – abstract proposals, 1 – partially feasible ideas, 2 – concrete and implementable solutions. Creativity was evaluated as 0 for formulaic approaches and 1 for original approaches.

The projective technique "Incomplete Sentences" allowed for the analysis of changes in attitudes toward propaganda and the depth of understanding of terminology.

Group work was assessed based on participation activity (0–3 points) and quality of argumentation (0–2 points).

Diagnostics were conducted in three stages: initial (testing, case studies, projective technique), ongoing assessment after each topic (discussions, situational tasks), and final evaluation (retesting, comprehensive case study). All data were recorded in individual participant cards and processed using IBM SPSS Statistics 27, with calculation of means, standard deviation, paired Student's t-test, and Pearson correlation coefficient to assess the dynamics and effectiveness of the training.

3. Pilot Testing of the Programme

3.1. The first topic: "The content of the concepts: information and propaganda in political and educational work within Internal Affairs Agencies units"

It involved the analysis of the case study "Special military operation," aimed at developing participants' analytical skills through group work and discussion. Participants, divided into groups of 4–5, analysed possible arguments "for" and "against" the initiation of the operation, after which they presented their conclusions for a plenary discussion.

During the discussion, participants concluded that the arguments in favour of initiating the special military operation were more substantial and convincing. Analysis of the presented reasoning indicated that the position justifying the necessity of the operation was based on a combination of factors, ranging from immediate military threats to long-term geopolitical risks. Participants paid particular attention to the concentration of Ukrainian forces near the borders of the DPR and LPR, which was considered a real risk of conflict escalation. Facts relating to the actions of radical

groups and the consequences of hostilities in Donbass since 2014 were also perceived as significant arguments. Furthermore, participants noted the preventive nature of the operation in the context of NATO expansion and potential nuclear threats.

Critical arguments, although considered, were not substantiated in as much detail and during the discussion largely amounted to Western propaganda theses without supporting evidence. Ultimately, participants concluded that the decision to initiate the special military operation was driven by the need to protect Russia's national interests and security, as well as to prevent a larger-scale conflict.

During the case discussion, a characteristic dynamic of group work was observed: at the initial stage, most participants were restrained in expressing their own positions. However, as the most active participants began presenting their viewpoints with reasoned arguments supported by analysis and factual evidence, a productive discussion environment emerged. This created the conditions necessary for engaging the remaining participants, who gradually moved from passive observation to substantive dialogue, significantly increasing both the intensity and quality of the discussion.

Working with the case helped participants not only develop analytical and argumentative skills but also form a comprehensive understanding of the cause-and-effect relationships underlying key political decisions. The sessions enabled participants to gain a clear understanding of fundamental concepts and to change their initially negative attitude toward propaganda as a professional tool. Through the lens of its educational function, it was demonstrated that ethical propaganda, based on principles of transparency and

alignment with audience interests, is an essential element of the professional socialisation of Internal Affairs Agencies personnel. The practical significance of the topic was reflected in participants' development of the ability to critically analyse informational materials and understand the mechanisms of ideological influence, which form the basis of professional competence for propagandists. As a result, distinctions between domestic and foreign propaganda were formulated (Table 1).

3.2. The second topic: "Socio-psychological conditions for effective propaganda"

The topic involved a comparative analysis of propaganda work under the conditions of the special military operation (SMO) and during peacetime, revealing significant differences in approaches and audience expectations. Under the SMO, the emphasis shifts toward mobilisation rhetoric, simplification of messages for rapid comprehension, enhanced emotional impact (through patriotic narratives and heroic imagery), and countering hostile propaganda. Timeliness and adaptability of content, as well as its alignment with current objectives, are critically important. In peacetime, propaganda is more systematic and long-term, focusing on the formation of stable values, legal education, and the prevention of destructive ideas. More complex formats (analytical materials, discussions) are acceptable, and the tone of messages is less directive.

During practical sessions with participants, detailed examples of information and propaganda work with Internal Affairs Agencies personnel serving in liberated territories were examined. Analysis of practice and discussions with active specialists showed that the most effective forms of

Table 1. Comparison of domestic and foreign propaganda (compiled by participants), n=57
Таблица 1. Сравнение отечественной и зарубежной пропаганды, (составлено слушателями), n=57

Domestic propaganda	Number of participants	Foreign propaganda	Number of participants
Main goals			
Consolidation of society	51	Promotion of liberal values	52
Protection of state interests	52	Russophobia	50
Fostering patriotism	48	Combating ideological opponents	47
Methods			
Centralised system	54	Decentralised system	53
Use of historical narratives	50	Emphasis on "freedom of information"	43
Target audiences			
Country's population	55	Citizens of other countries	50
Diasporas	44	International organisations	52
Allied states	47		

work were brief, emotionally charged materials emphasising the heroism and professionalism of Internal Affairs Agencies personnel operating under difficult conditions, the historical significance of the ongoing special military operation, as well as the personal example of commanders and positive instances of interaction with the local population. Particular attention was given to specific cases in which promptly prepared video materials – including frontline reports, interviews with personnel serving in liberated territories, and footage of restored social infrastructure – were shown to personnel and reliably enhanced the morale and psychological state of military and law enforcement staff, reinforcing their confidence in the successful completion of assigned tasks.

In peacetime, as demonstrated by the case studies analysed during the sessions, more analytical formats are effective – such as expert roundtables, discussion clubs, and individual conversations that allow for consideration of the specific characteristics of personnel. Particular attention during the sessions was given to the issue of insufficient effectiveness of explanatory work within the troops and Internal Affairs Agencies units. Numerous examples were examined in which personnel, lacking timely and comprehensive information from immediate supervisors, had to rely on contradictory messages from social media and mass media. In particular, the situation regarding statements by Western politicians about alleged ongoing negotiations to resolve the conflict was analysed in detail; in the absence of professional clarifications from propagandists, these statements naturally raised questions among law enforcement personnel. Analysis showed that such informational injections, when not promptly refuted and properly explained within the system, indeed have a negative impact on the morale and psychological state of personnel, undermining trust in the command and reducing motivation.

Particular discussion arose around techniques for working with different types of audiences. It was noted that propaganda has the greatest effect when targeting the undecided segment of the audience, whereas attempts to persuade staunch opponents often prove ineffective. In this context, strategies for identifying like-minded individuals and relying on them were considered, as well as techniques for neutralising aggressive opponents through the use of humour and raising the intellectual level of the discussion.

Reflection at the end of the session showed that familiarisation with modern propaganda techniques in itself has significant motivational potential, encouraging personnel to adopt a more conscious and professional approach to fulfilling their responsibilities in working with staff.

3.3. The third topic: "Psychological conditions for the perception of propaganda materials by Internal Affairs Agencies personnel"

It generated considerable interest among participants in issues related to individual informational needs and behavioural characteristics in the digital environment.

The results of identifying the primary channels of information perception showed that more than half of the participants were of the visual type. This underscores the need for active use of visual formats (infographics, vid-

eos, presentations), visualisation of complex concepts and data, development of specialised templates for visual presentation of materials, and consideration of this characteristic when preparing educational manuals and methodological materials.

Analysis of the results of group assignments revealed significant differences in information perception depending on participants' psychological characteristics. It was found that participants with an analytical mindset (23 out of 57) demonstrated better results when working with structured data and logical arguments but experienced difficulties with emotionally charged materials. Practically oriented participants (20) more effectively assimilated information through concrete examples from professional practice, actively engaging in role-playing exercises, but required additional support for theoretical generalisations. Emotionally sensitive participants (14) showed high engagement when working with materials containing personal stories and examples but needed a special approach when complex theoretical concepts were presented. These differences highlight the necessity of a differentiated approach to the training of propagandists, combining various information delivery formats to ensure maximal learning effectiveness across all categories of participants.

The most challenging tasks for participants were those related to identifying manipulative techniques in information presentation. During the discussion, particular interest was shown in the mechanisms underlying the formation of the "primacy effect" when assessing the credibility of information.

The practical significance of these results lies in their potential use to enhance the precision of informational influence, optimise content delivery formats, and develop personalised approaches to working with personnel. Participants particularly emphasised the value of the acquired knowledge for their professional activities, highlighting the need for further in-depth study of the psychological mechanisms of information perception and methods for countering manipulative techniques.

3.4. The fourth topic: "Forms and methods of information and propaganda work in Internal Affairs Agencies"

Comprehensive surveys revealed that participants spend an average of 5–6 hours per day in the digital environment, with 50 out of 57 respondents identifying Telegram as their primary messenger for receiving information. These data indicate the deep integration of digital technologies into the professional activities of Internal Affairs Agencies personnel and underscore the need to adapt the training process to contemporary media realities.

Traditional methods, including posters, leaflets, informational bulletins, and videos for internal screens, demonstrated consistent effectiveness in terms of long-term impact and the ability to concentrate key messages. At the same time, work with modern digital technologies, particularly Telegram channels and social media, showed advantages in the speed of information dissemination and the level of audience engagement.

Analysis of participants' practical work revealed that more than half of the respondents experienced difficulties in

identifying reliable channels for obtaining information intended for subsequent dissemination within units. This problem is particularly acute on the Telegram messenger, where official and questionable information sources coexist. During the sessions, it was determined that the main reasons for this situation are: the absence of a unified departmental list of recommended information sources; insufficient training of personnel in media literacy; the high dynamism of the information landscape; and the difficulty of verifying information under conditions of information overload.

To address these issues, participants were provided with specific recommendations, including a list of verified propaganda channels that have proven to be reliable sources of information. These included:

– "Propagandist's Notebook" (methodological materials for propaganda work);

– "ZA PRAVDU" (analysis of current events from a patriotic perspective);

– "Kornilov" (military-political analytics);

– "War on Fakes" (analysis of disinformation campaigns);

– "World Today with Yuri Podolyaka" (international politics and security).

During the practical review of the proposed cases, a table was created together with the participants for propagandists to assess the effectiveness of their messages (Table 2).

3.5. Fifth topic: "Organisation of counter-propaganda and debunking fake news"

A comprehensive assessment of participants' initial level of training yielded the following results. The conducted entrance test (15 multiple-choice questions) and analysis of practical assignments showed that 19 out of

57 participants (approximately one-third) demonstrated a distorted or incomplete understanding of the basic concepts of counter-propaganda and the mechanisms of disinformation dissemination.

As part of the practical session on analysing fake news, an interactive discussion was conducted to identify key patterns in the perception of disinformation. The participants (51 out of 57) admitted that they had opened deliberately false news at least once, citing emotionally charged headlines (37 participants), curiosity (33 participants), and the viral nature of the content (27 participants) as reasons. The analysis revealed that the most effective fake news exploits cognitive biases (including the "truth effect" from repeated exposure), emotional triggers (fear, outrage), and simplified cause-and-effect relationships. Thirty-six participants reported instances of initially believing false information, with an average recognition time of 2–3 minutes of active reading. The discussion highlighted major vulnerability factors, including stereotypical thinking, trust in "convenient" information, and a lack of critical analysis under conditions of information overload. Participants actively engaged in examining why false news is more appealing, emphasising its emotional intensity and alignment with simplified psychological perception patterns.

4. Results of the Empirical Study

The survey aimed at assessing the participants' understanding of key terms (propaganda, disinformation, fake news, etc.) as well as practical challenges revealed significant gaps in comprehension of essential informational categories. Over 70 % of respondents experienced difficulties differentiating concepts such as information, disinformation, propaganda, agitation, counter-propaganda, manipulation, fake news, resonance technologies, and destructive

Table 2. Guide for propagandists assessing the effectiveness of their messages
Таблица 2. Руководство для пропагандистов, оценивающих эффективность своих сообщений

Criterion	Description	Importance
Target audience	Identification and segmentation of the audience for maximum effectiveness	High
Message content	Clarity, conciseness, and persuasiveness of the message	High
Emotional tone	Use of emotions to enhance impact	High
Distribution channel	Selection of optimal channels to reach the target audience	Medium
Frequency of repetition	Repetition of the message to reinforce it in consciousness	Medium
Information source	Selection of reliable and authoritative sources	High
Visual elements	Use of images and videos to attract attention	Medium
Call to action	Specific instructions or calls to action to engage the audience	Medium
Feedback	Collection and analysis of audience responses to adjust strategy	High
Relevance of topic	Alignment of the message with current events and trends	Medium

content, even though many of these terms have long beenpart of the professional lexicon and are widely used in the context of intensified information confrontation, including countering Russophobic ideological narratives. The method of emotional resonance is not new, yet its application has become particularly relevant under current conditions.

The propagandists themselves noted a problem: they lack sufficient proficiency with modern digital platforms and tools. This hinders their ability to quickly find reliable information, verify it, and effectively adapt content for work with personnel. Many do not know where and how to locate verified data, or which resources and verification methods to use to ensure that materials are not only persuasive but also accurate. The greatest deficiencies were identified in the following areas:

– creating informational content for personnel for propaganda purposes;

– criteria for selecting reliable sources of information beyond official documents and legal acts;

– use of modern tools and technologies for conducting propaganda work with personnel;

– psychological aspects of information perception and increasing trust in propaganda materials;

– methods for countering fake messages and algorithms for conducting counter-propaganda activities in Internal Affairs Agencies.

It was also found that the overwhelming majority of respondents have a negative attitude toward propaganda materials, perceiving them as imposed and manipulative. At the same time, the respondents recognise the high significance of propaganda in society.

The data obtained indicated the need for a systematic modernisation of professional development programmes for propagandists. In this context, an experimental pilot Programme of additional professional education was developed and partially tested.

The results of the empirical study demonstrated the high effectiveness of the developed propagandist training Programme for the Internal Affairs Agencies. Initial diagnostics revealed significant knowledge gaps: the average score on the entrance test was only 9.5 out of 15, with 8 out of 57 participants showing a low level of preparation. The greatest difficulties were observed in identifying manipulative techniques (39 % correct answers), understanding cognitive biases (42 %), and grasping the essence of counter-propaganda (47 %) (Table 3).

After completing the training, significant progress was observed: the average score increased to 13 out of 15 (Table 3), while the number of participants with a high level of competence rose from 17 to 48 (out of 57), and the low-level group was completely eliminated. The greatest improvements were recorded in the following areas: identification of fake information (correct responses increased from 39 % to 97 %), content verification methods (from 42 % to 94 %), and counter-propaganda activity algorithms (from 47 % to 96 %).

Statistical analysis (t=12.37, $p<0.001$, d=1.87) confirmed the high significance of the results. The study convincingly demonstrated that a comprehensive approach, combining theoretical training with practical exercises, effectively develops the professional competencies of propagandists within the Internal Affairs Agencies system.

Of particular interest are the results of the practical case analyses, which were evaluated according to three criteria: depth of analysis (0–2 points), practical applicability (0–2 points), and creativity of solution (0–1 point). The most illustrative outcomes were as follows: for the case "Special military operation," the average score increased from 1.2 to 2.7; for the task "Positive propaganda of Russia," from 0.8 to 2.4; and for the case "Internal Affairs Agencies image," score increased from 0.5 to 2.1 points.

A qualitative analysis using the projective method "Incomplete Sentences" revealed significant changes in the professional mindset of the participants. At the initial stage, 47 % of associations with the term "propaganda" were negative; after the training, 89 % of definitions reflected a positive connotation (constructive propaganda). Correct understanding of the essence of counter-propaganda was demonstrated by 52 out of 57 participants (compared to 22 at the entry stage), and the number of participants showing readiness for practical implementation of the acquired knowledge increased from 14 to 44.

Statistical analysis confirmed the significance of the obtained results. A paired t-test demonstrated a high degree of reliability in the differences between the entry and exit assessments (t=12.37, $p<0.001$). Cohen's d (d=1.87) indicates a large practical effect of the training. A strong correlation

Table 3. Comparative results of entrance and exit tests
Таблица 3. Сравнительные результаты входного и выходного тестирований

Indicator	Entrance test	Exit test
Average score (out of 15)	9.5	13
Low level (0–5 points)	8 participants	0 participants
Medium level (6–10 points)	32 participants	9 participants
High level (11–15 points)	17 participants	48 participants

between theoretical knowledge and success in solving practical cases ($r=0.82$) further confirms the comprehensive nature of the competencies acquired.

Of particular importance is the observed development in key competencies: systematic understanding of propaganda technologies (31 participants at a high level), practical skills in information verification (33 participants), and critical analysis of media content (30 participants). These findings indicate that the Programme not only facilitates the acquisition of theoretical knowledge but also fosters practice-oriented competencies essential for effective professional performance.

DISCUSSION

The study yielded significant findings with both theoretical and practical implications for the training of propagandists in the Internal Affairs Agencies. Analysis of the data indicates that the training programme proved highly effective in enhancing professional competencies among personnel responsible for information and propaganda activities. The most notable improvements were observed in participants' understanding of propaganda as a professional tool. Results demonstrate a shift from predominantly negative perceptions of propaganda (47 % negative associations at the beginning of the training) to a positive reinterpretation (89 % after completion), reflecting a substantial transformation in the perception of propaganda – from skepticism to recognition of its importance as an instrument for fostering ideological resilience among personnel.

A comparative analysis with previous studies [24; 25] indicates that the proposed Programme differs significantly from traditional approaches to training personnel responsible for managing staff in Internal Affairs Agencies units. Unlike existing methods, which primarily emphasise theoretical aspects, the Programme implements a comprehensive practice-oriented approach, integrating classical ideological training techniques with modern digital technologies.

The practical implementation of the Programme demonstrated its effectiveness in developing participants' systematic understanding of information influence mechanisms and their ability to critically analyse media content. These results are of significant value for improving the professional training system within the Russian Ministry of Internal Affairs. The proven effectiveness of the proposed approach supports its recommendation for integration into the educational process, which is expected to enhance the quality of propaganda work within law enforcement agencies and strengthen their ideological capacity.

The high effectiveness of the training can be attributed to several factors. First, the programme combines foundational knowledge about the nature of propaganda with practical skills in creating propaganda content and countering disinformation. Second, special attention is given to digital technologies, including social media, messaging platforms, and data analysis tools. Third, the use of interactive teaching methods – case studies, role-playing exercises, and group discussions – promotes not only knowledge acquisition but also a deeper understanding of propaganda activities.

A key finding of the study was the identification of major challenges in the current training of propagandists. The greatest difficulties reported by personnel concern information verification (particularly on Telegram), the creation of effective content for social media, and the psychological impact on target audiences. These results underscore the need for further development of the training system, including the establishment of departmental standards for information work and a registry of verified sources.

The practical significance of this study lies in the potential for the developed Programme to be successfully integrated into the educational process of higher education institutions within the Ministry of Internal Affairs of Russia. Its implementation is expected to enhance the quality of propaganda work, strengthen the moral and psychological resilience of personnel, and foster public trust in law enforcement agencies. This is particularly relevant in the context of the special military operation, where the effectiveness of informational influence largely determines the success of operational and service tasks.

It is also necessary to acknowledge certain limitations of the study. First, the sample of 57 participants requires further testing of the Programme on a larger audience. Second, long-term observations are needed to assess the durability of the results obtained. Third, the rapidly changing information environment necessitates the continuous updating of the training content.

Promising directions for further research may include the development of methods for integrating artificial intelligence into media content analysis, the creation of a system for evaluating the effectiveness of propaganda materials, and an in-depth study of the cognitive mechanisms underlying information perception by Internal Affairs Agencies personnel.

The developed Programme not only addresses existing gaps in the training of propagandists but also introduces innovative approaches aligned with the challenges of contemporary information warfare. Implementing the proposed methodology is expected to significantly enhance the effectiveness of information and propaganda activities within law enforcement agencies. The author hopes that this study will make a substantial contribution to the advancement of professional training systems for Internal Affairs Agencies personnel.

CONCLUSIONS

Practice-oriented training methods demonstrated the highest effectiveness in preparing propagandists. The analysis of specific cases, such as coverage of the special military operation, countering fake news, and shaping a positive image of the Internal Affairs Agencies, led to a significant improvement in participants' performance.

Interactive training formats, including group discussions, role-playing exercises, and projective techniques, facilitated not only the acquisition of knowledge but also a shift in participants' attitudes toward propaganda as a professional tool.

The study revealed that personnel face significant challenges in working with digital platforms, particularly in identifying reliable information sources and producing

effective content for social media. In this context, priority areas include enhancing media literacy, developing departmental standards for information management, and establishing a registry of verified sources.

The developed Programme has demonstrated its effectiveness and can be recommended for implementation in the educational processes of Russian Ministry of Internal Affairs institutions. Its adoption is expected to enhance the quality of propaganda work, strengthen the ideological resilience of personnel, and foster public trust in the law enforcement system amid contemporary informational challenges.

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Содержание и технология подготовки пропагандистов для органов внутренних дел

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Аннотация: В условиях роста деструктивного влияния социальных сетей и распространения фейковых новостей традиционные методы пропаганды нуждаются в переосмыслении и адаптации. Особую актуальность приобретает вопрос подготовки кадров, способных эффективно осуществлять информационно-пропагандистскую деятельность в системе МВД России. Цель исследования – разработка и апробация программы повышения квалификации для сотрудников ОВД, ответственных за пропагандистскую работу. В исследовании приняли участие 187 чел., включая 100 сотрудников подразделений ОВД, 30 действующих пропагандистов и 57 слушателей курса повышения квалификации. Для сбора данных использовались анкетирование, проективная методика «Неоконченные предложения», входное и выходное тестирование, а также анализ практических кейсов. Разработанная программа включает пять тематических блоков, направленных на формирование как теоретических знаний, так и практических умений пропагандистской работы. Результаты апробации показали значительное повышение уровня компетенций слушателей: средний балл по итоговому тестированию вырос с 9,5 до 13 из 15 возможных ($p<0{,}001$), а доля слушателей с высоким уровнем подготовки увеличилась с 29,8 до 84,2 %. Особенно значительный прогресс был достигнут в области идентификации фейковой информации (с 39 до 97 % правильных ответов) и ведения контрпропагандистской работы (с 47 до 96 %). Полученные результаты свидетельствуют о высокой эффективности разработанной методики и ее потенциале для повышения качества пропагандистской работы в правоохранительных органах.

Ключевые слова: информационно-пропагандистская работа; органы внутренних дел; повышение квалификации; информационное противодействие; фейковые новости; контрпропаганда.

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