

Strategic Lying By David Chandler

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If a representative of the Pentagon on February 18 announces that its recently formed and heavily funded *Office of Strategic Influence* intends to plant false and misleading stories in the world press, to manipulate public opinion, who would be gullible enough to believe their denials on February 20? Certainly not the world outside our borders.

Sandwiched neatly between the Pentagon's announcement and its denials, Michael Moore's new book, *Stupid White Men* (a commentary on the corrupt state of politics in America) was released on February 19. Could the Pentagon's announcement have been another of Michael Moore's infamous publicity stunts, timed to greet the release of his book? It certainly looks that way!

The problem with lying (even "strategic," military lying) is that in distorting our *portrayal* of the truth we distort *our own perception* of the truth. We become victims of our own lies. There is no one at the helm who is above the fray, unaffected by the fog of lies. One cannot lie effectively without *living* the lie. Living the lie, in turn, blinds us to the truth.

Truth is hard enough to come by even under the best of circumstances. Science is a systematic process of truth-discovery. Even in examining the physical world, which is laid out before us for all to touch and see and probe for ourselves, discerning the truth is a slow, uncertain process that builds cumulatively over the millennia. Truth in the social sciences, is much harder to achieve because living people and their interactions are far more complex than rocks and stars, and objectivity is impossible to achieve.

Now add to the mix self-interest, power-seeking, manipulation, and lies. Those who practice these "strategies" create a quagmire they themselves must cross. What is the "national interest" in a "democracy" that looks and feels like a "plutocracy," an oligarchy of wealth? In our mythology we are a government "of the people, by the people, and for the people," but in the real world of overwhelming corporate power we are none of these.

In Orwell's vision of the now past future of *1984*, all information was controlled by the *Ministry of Truth*. Our own *Ministry of Truth* is being established before our very eyes. God help us as we attempt to teach our children of their high calling as human beings.