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PREVENTING THE USE OF CHILDREN AS WEAPONS OF WAR

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Child Soldiers in the Cyber Domain

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1. What is a cyber child soldier?
2. Why should we care?
3. Scoping study: methods and findings
4. Legal framework and definitions
5. Past cases
6. Implications for NATO operations
7. Suggestions on OA approach

Outline

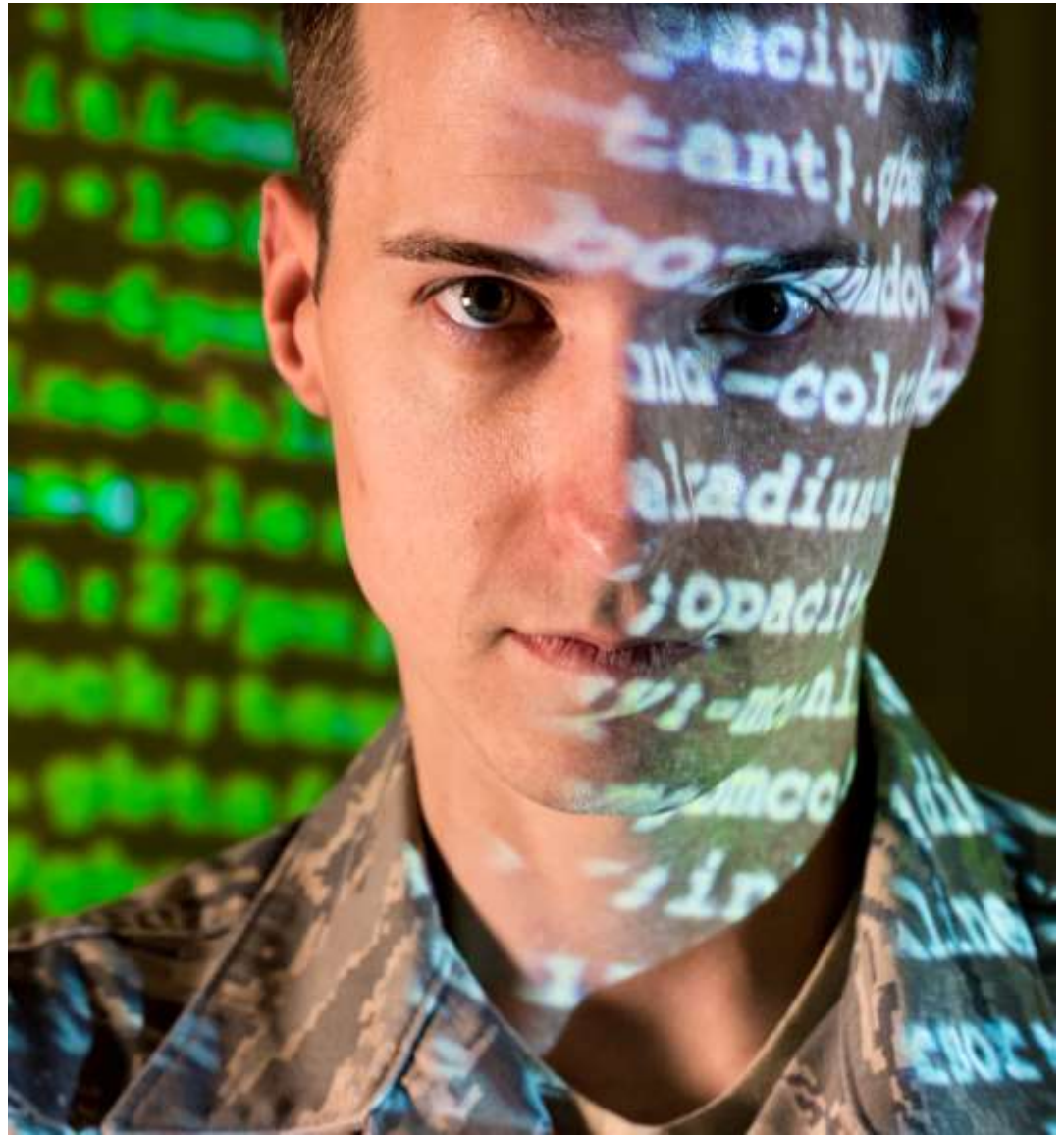


What is a cyber child soldier?

Existing definitions do not
extend neatly into the
cyber domain

Why should we care?

Children engaged in cyber operations still face greater risk than their peers, and bolster adversary capabilities





Messes and OA

Cyber child soldiers are what a soft Operational Analysis would describe as a Mess or Wicked Problem:

- **Chaotic and Ill-Structured**
- **Issue is unclear, disagreement on its characteristics**
- **Agreement that there should be some concern about the issue**

Beginning the Discussion: Scoping Study Results

Carried out an initial scoping study, examining law and policy, past cases, areas for further exploration, and potential methods, essential to Soft OA's methodology. Our work:

- Is interpretive and inductive;
- Helps understand the purpose of study in this field;
- Is qualitative and judgement-based; and,
- Will fully include key stakeholders in process.



Scoping Study

Key Results

- International legal framework on cyberwarfare, and on child soldiers, are both still evolving, causing even more of a grey area when combined
- Use of cyber attacks is on the rise, and children have been involved in some, but difficult to know who exactly the perpetrators are in most cases
- Children in cyberwarfare fall into a poorly defined legal area potentially leading to an advantage in using them
- Some of the traditional advantages of child soldiers, e.g. ease of recruitment, also apply in the cyber domain
- There are many questions still to be answered, i.e. great uncertainty

- International humanitarian law (IHL): reference to recruitment into the armed forces or use in hostilities, also a war crime under the Rome Statute
- Under IHL, intent is principle of distinction to protect civilians; do not want too broad a definition of child soldier so as to avoid unnecessary child casualties
- The Paris Principles definition is much broader, encompassing all children under 18 associated with armed forces and groups
- Intent is to protect children and provide for their reintegration into society, so a much broader definition is desirable

Legal framework and definitions

Legal framework and definitions

- How and whether to apply these definitions to cyber child soldiers?
- What counts as an armed group in the cyber domain?
- What counts as openly carrying arms in the cyber domain?
- Criminality vs Conflict vs War
- What actions taken by a child make them associated with an armed force or group in the cyber domain, under the Paris Principles?

We can use “association with a group” and “political ends” as dividing line characteristics of Cyber Child Soldiers.

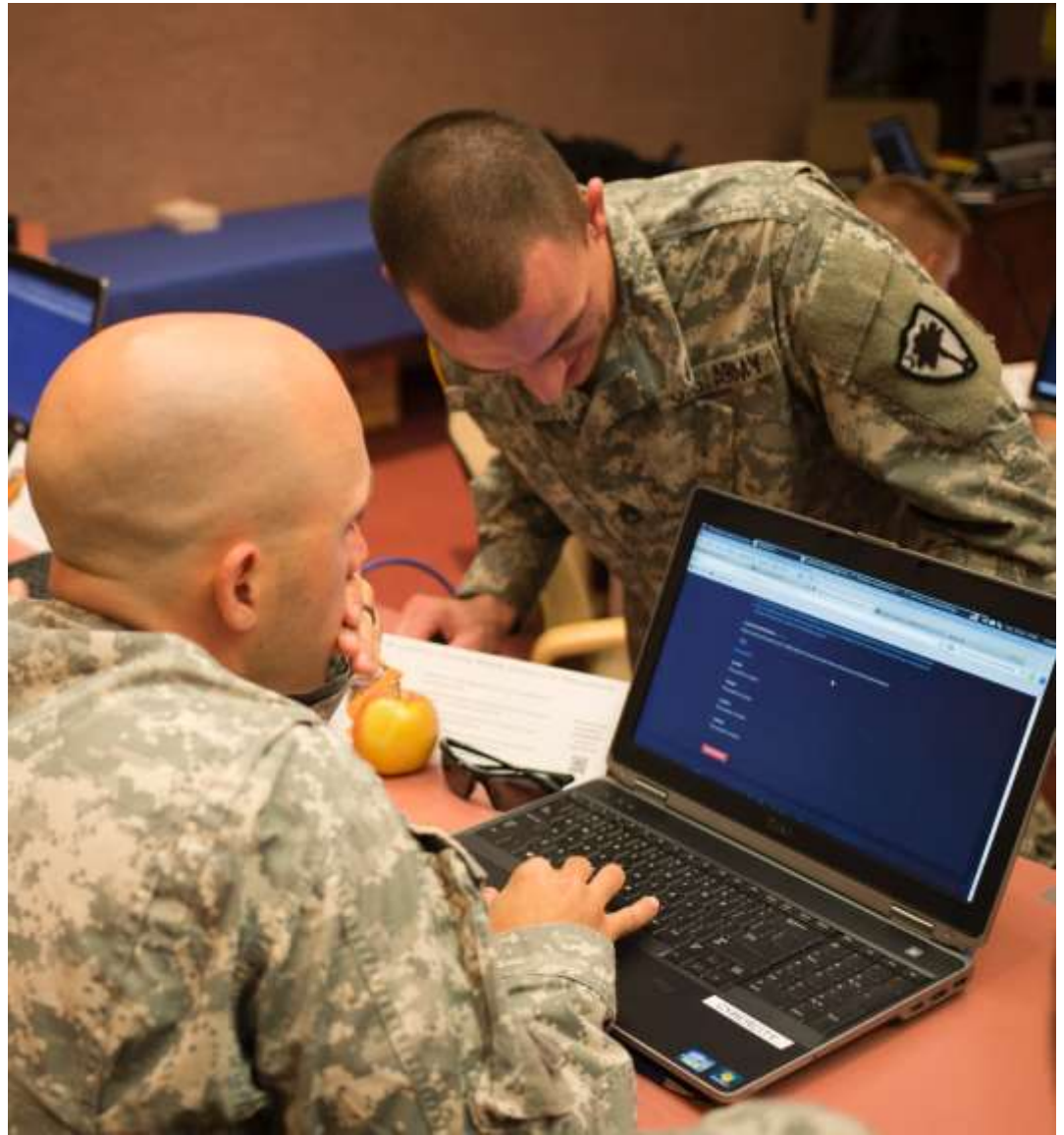
- Estonia, 2007
- Recruitment via online propaganda
- Cyber defence youth groups
- Underage hackers

The ability to cloak the identity of perpetrators in the cyber domain can make it difficult to identify when children are involved.

Past Cases

Implications for NATO operations

Easier recruitment or mobilization through propaganda; young people are increasingly computer savvy; potential for socialization into violence?



Suggestions on OA approach

- Current state of knowledge is limited
- Need qualitative approaches to understand scope of issue: who is using children in the cyber domain, how are they being recruited, what roles are they playing
- As the issue becomes better understood, there is a greater role for quantitative work: need to get data on scale of problem, ages of children involved, understand variation across contexts
- Involvement of stakeholders in government, industry, and child protection, importance of context and ethics, demonstrate need for multi-methodology approach